FANTASY AS ALTERNATE REALITY IN SELECT POPULAR VICTORIAN NOVELS

ABSTRACT

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

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IN

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BY

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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ABSTRACT

The present study attempts to analyse the selected fantasy novels with the aim to examine their author's "impulse for fantasy" which introduces their readers to a compelling world of alternate reality. Each of these novelists (Charles Dickens, George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll) have defined and redefined the fantastic method to probe and expose the world of reality. The alternate/imaginary world thus created, gives expression to a new reality artistically adapted and manipulated to reveal the truth of the real world.

The Victorian age in literature was an age of realism and novel was the chief form adopted. It was an age of revolutionary changes in every field – mechanical, social, religious, political, economic, scientific, and intellectual. The industrial revolution with its rapid growth and development changed every aspect of British life; the writings of this period, reflect the restless spirit of the age. The realistic novels present the doubts, conflicts and frustrations of the Victorian world regardless of the impact being too didactic, dull, and boring. Hence, the Victorian writers felt the need to turn towards a different mode – fantasy, to capture the attention of the reader and to express their dissatisfaction with the contemporary world.

Several critics have defined fantasy variously, according to the way it has been used in literature. It may elude proper definition, but in general, fantasy is understood and appreciated as a genre that employs magic,

supernatural beings and events, mysterious places, creation of other worlds, time travel, hallucinations, dreams, and all that is extraordinary and impossible within the realm of realistic fiction. Fantasy as a genre did not originate in the Victorian period, rather it is as old as literature itself. But its form and modes underwent changes with the passage of time.

In earlier times, the fantasy writings: fairy tales, folklores, myths, and morality plays employed fantasy elements in the creation of fantastical worlds with supernatural beings and humans with extraordinary magical powers. During the sixteenth and seventeenth century, fantasy was adapted in drama and poetry by Sydney, Spenser, Shakespeare; and by Bunyan and a few other writers in prose writings. In the eighteenth century with the development of the novel genre, fantasy found a perfect medium for expression. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the gothic revival credited to Horace Walpole – with the publication of his novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), provided the staple elements for the fantasy works to be produced during the nineteenth century. Besides this, not much was done in the fantasy mode. It was only with Edger Taylor's translation of *German Popular Stories* (1823-26), that people's interest was aroused in children's literature and with the publication of Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* (1846), fantasy entered its most creative phase.

While scanning the literary horizon of the Victorian era, one comes across a number of important writers who have used the fantasy mode/fantasy elements in their writings. A few prominent names stand out

for their remarkable usage and contribution to the fantasy genre. Their unique manner of adopting and adapting the fantasy mode for the expression of their personal commitment and emotional conditioning, transforms it into a distinctive art form. The selected authors – Charles Dickens, George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, and Lewis Carroll, do justice to their claim to distinction and contribution to the fantasy genre.

The present study consists of an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The Introduction presents the historical background of Victorian England and briefly discusses the prevailing mainstream realistic literature of the age. It also provides the reason for the shift from realism to fantasy in literature. This is followed by the definition and evolution of the 'fantasy' genre. Along with the selected writers, other fantasy authors of the Victorian age, are also discussed in brief, to give a complete picture of the Victorian fantasy writings.

Chapter I studies in detail, Charles Dickens' Christmas Books, in order to explore the use of fantasy elements and techniques that help to posit the true picture of Victorian England. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part begins with the analysis of the first Christmas Book, *The Christmas Carol: In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas* (1843), followed by the analysis of *The Chimes: A Goblin Story of Some Bells That Rang an Old Year Out and a New Year In* (1844), and *The Cricket on the Hearth: A Fairy Tale of Home* (1845). The fourth Christmas Book, *The Battle of Life: A Love Story* (1846), does not involve any fantastic element

and deals with no social issue, hence it has not been taken up for analysis. The second part of this chapter, examines in detail, the last book of Christmas Series, *The Haunted Man and The Ghost's Bargain: A Fancy for Christmas-Time* (1848).

The Christmas Books, mark a celebration of the Christmas Spirit and Christian virtues of love, joy, and kindness for all. They are deliberate and persuasive in their attempt to guide the people in the art of righteous living and conducting themselves in a gracious and humane manner. They are a critique of the individual's (protagonists) action/behaviour as well as the society's responsibility towards the common man. They foreground the significance of Christian virtues in the life of the individual and of others in the society. By evoking the extraordinary 'other' world of supernatural beings (ghosts, spirits, goblins, fairies) with the help of fantasy, Dickens is able to juxtapose the real world with that of alternate reality. His ingenious mixture of fantasy and realism, gentle satire and orthodox wisdom suffuses the Christmas Books with the power of persuasion. As a writer, he straddles both the worlds – the real and the fantastic – so as to reveal the harsh and bitter truth of existence, to cast a pessimistic outlook on the fate of humanity and thereby emphasise the need to make the real world a better place to live in.

Dickens' use of fantasy situations has endowed the narratives with artistic and thematic beauty. The fantasy mode has proven to be an effective tool to document the evils of the society and to provide an indirect social

commentary on the contemporary facts of the Victorian era. The Christmas Books are grounded in the hard facts of – nineteenth century industrial capitalism, mechanical and affected mode of existence, humiliating experiences of his (Dickens) own childhood, to help arouse sympathy for the poor and the downtrodden, to bring about an ethical and emotional transformation by reviving the Christmas traditions and evoking the Christmas spirit of love and generosity. In the Christmas Books, Dickens has given full reign to his romantic imagination so as to engage the attention and interest of the readers as well as give expression to his reformative zeal and do justice to the task undertaken – to present life as it is and as it should be.

Chapter II examines and analyses George MacDonald's *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance* (1858) and Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby* (1863).

Phantastes – a fairy tale for adults is outstanding in its imaginative insight, narrative powers, and subtle yet powerful moral messages. It is a fascinating story of a young man's (Anodos) journey into the fantastic world of romance and imagination. In this Fairy Land, he encounters various supernatural happenings with supernatural characters both good and evil – spectre, ogre, fairy men and women, goblins, giants, anthropomorphic plants and animals. Caught in the magic and wonder of this other world/reality, his spiritual wellbeing is threatened but from which he emerges triumphantly with greater inner strength, goodness and self

knowledge. Expressive of MacDonald's liberal views and unorthodox religious beliefs, the book resonates with a conscious moral purpose – to instruct and to uplift mankind; to sweep away errors of life so as to reveal its underlying beauty and above all to believe and imagine in the existence of God.

The *Water Babies*, a didactic moral fable deals with the dark world of Victorian evils through methods of fairytale fiction. Kingsley, adapting the light tone of fairytales has used all the fantastical elements to convey the moral lesson to both children and adults alike, in a gentle and entertaining manner. His aim is to make one realise the miraculous power of divine reality underlying the world of nature that aids spiritual regeneration. The lesson in cleanliness is in context of both physical and spiritual hygiene. Tom, a chimney-sweep, escapes from the harsh conditions of Victorian life by turning into a water baby. In the magical water world (alternative reality) of fairies, talking animals and sea creatures, he along with the readers confronts aspects of the real world in new wondrous forms. The underwater adventures of Tom not only help him to overcome his "tomfooleries" (weaknesses) but also provide an exposé of the pressing social, political, religious issues and prejudices of the time (child labour, education, morality, faith). By blending the fantastic and the real world, the book offers the reader, the hope and faith in humanity, and to work for a larger charity, goodwill and forgiveness – indeed, to become a better person.

Chapter III studies Lewis Carroll's Alice Books – *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), and *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871) in order to explore the use of fantasy to get a true picture of the Victorian world.

The Alice Books are in the form of a series of adventures, strange encounters and extraordinary happenings that befall Alice, both in Wonderland as well as in the Looking-Glass world. The dream motif explains the abundance of nonsensical, ridiculous and absurd events of the story. The narrative follows the dream as Alice encounters the various episodes which need to be interpreted in relation to herself and the world in which she lived in. The episodic framework of the novels, strings together the various incidents to give them an organic unity, and sustains them by an overwhelming mood of humour and playfulness. However, the fantastic and the bizarre happenings read as a satiric comment, an exposé of the contemporary life and situation – the Victorian Age, in which Carroll lived. It is this contextualisation which gives the Alice Books, their peculiar charm and humour, without which Carroll's satire would not have found resonance in the adult world.

He has set aside the call of logical rules and rational principles. The ingenuity of setting, the creative nonsense – a child's fantasia/alternative reality, against the backdrop of established Victorian manners, allows the writer to both subvert convention and emphasise the eschewed nature of the world of harsh reality. The books read as a kind of philosophical banter to

highlight the absurdity of the real world against the silly nonsense of the alternate world. Furthermore, they give expression to Lewis Carroll's celebration of youthful outlook – the need to preserve childlike innocence and simplicity which is the domain of immense imaginative possibilities.

The Conclusion offers in brief the finding of this study and explains, how the fantasy writings/novels of Charles Dickens, George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, and Lewis Carroll, apart form being read for pleasure, can also be studied for a deeper understanding of the Victorian age. The alternative world of reality is adapted to reflect upon the Victorian conditions/life. But the authorial intention remains the same – to make the fantastic, work as an instrument of transformation and redemption, a plan for betterment.

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Dated.03.:12.:2012

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Ms. Vinita Soni has carried out her study on **"Fantasy as Alternate Reality in Select Popular Victorian Novels"** under my supervision for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in **English** of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. This is her original work and I hope it will add to the already existing literature on Fantasy.

Dr. Nikhat Taj

(Supervisor)

Dedicated

To my

Family

PREFACE

Critics have defined fantasy variously, according to the way it has been used in literature. It may elude proper definition, but in general, fantasy is understood and appreciated as a genre that employs magic, supernatural beings and events, mysterious places, creation of other worlds, time travel, hallucinations, dreams, and all that is extraordinary and impossible within the realm of realistic fiction. A critical survey of fantasy writings during the Victorian Age, foreground it as a powerful mode of literary expression in the form of: Fantasy for Children, Escapist Fantasy, and Serious, Meaningful Fantasy or Fantasy with a Purpose.

i) Fantasy for Children: the Victorian fantasists created alternative worlds for their young readers to celebrate the concept of "beautiful child" and childhood.

ii) Escapist Fantasy: a class of fantasy writing which distinguished itself as escapist in nature from the "repressive ideology of Victorian culture and society." It aimed at the reader's pleasure in the invented characters and situations by evoking their sense of wonder through the juxtaposition of the real and unreal, ordinary and extraordinary, actual and imaginary worlds.

iii) Serious, Meaningful Fantasy or Fantasy with a Purpose: the fantasy works which made the readers a part of their writer's creative vision and provide an insight into their personal and emotional commitment to life by giving expression to a world of alternate reality or reality transformed.

It is among the writers belonging to this category of Fantasy with a Purpose that we have a group of novelists who used fantasy as a serious art form. They are namely – Charles Dickens, George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll to mention a few. In an age devoted to mainstream realistic literature, these novelists have successfully used fantasy as a medium to reflect upon the times; voice their concern; and address the problems of the contemporary society. The fantasy genre that developed during the Victorian period was not against the mainstream realism but in addition to it. Conscious of the shortcomings of conventional realism and its attendant dangers, these writers through the fantasy mode, dealt with the harsh realities of the Victorian world in an oblique manner. They attacked through humour and comedy; irony and satire; farce and burlesque; ridiculous and absurd. The need for change is posited through a study in contrast by employing the medium of fantasy.

Over the years, critics have successfully searched for symbolic and meaningful insight into these books. However, no attempt has been made to focus upon the use of fantasy mode as an artistic device of meaningful communication of their vision of life. These novels as a work of fantasy, contribute a richness and wholeness of effect in making them artistically compact, meaningful and beautiful.

The present study attempts to analyse these selected fantasy novels with the aim to examine their author's "impulse for fantasy" which introduces their readers to a compelling world of alternate reality. Each of these novelists have

defined and redefined the fantastic method to probe and expose the world of reality. By evoking a sense of awe and wonder in the unusual and the extraordinary, in the beautiful and the marvellous, in the bizarre and the grotesque, they stimulate the readers to become perceptive of the true measure of reality. The alternate/imaginary world thus created, gives expression to a new reality artistically adapted and manipulated to reveal the truth of the real world. The method adopted by them to achieve the desired effect and objective, can be described in the words of Prickett as "aesthetic inversion" wherein the narrative deliberately moves between life (real world) and art (alternate reality) and between art and life. Thus, these Victorian fantasists made fantasy a significant expression of Victorian realism or in other words, treated fantasy and realism as two sides of the same coin.

In course of this research work, the attempt has been to review all the critical studies available on Victorian fantasy, so as to give a relevant direction and perspective to it. Sometimes repetition has become inevitable due to the very nature of this study. A select bibliography at the end, lists the books and sources read and consulted for this study. Documentation of sources has been done as nearly as possible in accordance to the guidelines of the *MLA Handbook for Writing of Research Papers (Seventh edition).*

(Vinita Soni)

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(Vinita Soni)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
FANTASY AND THE VICTORIAN WORLD

Victorian age is the most interesting and striking in the history of British literature. The literature produced during this period has attracted the attention of many critics to its very many aspects. To know about it, we should first try to understand the general conditions prevalent in England during that time. The industrial revolution in the nineteenth century with its rapid growth and development transformed every aspect of British life. It is described as the age of machinery. Great scientific inventions and discoveries were made which changed the thought and lives of the people. The development of railway system altered the consciousness of space and time, and played a major role in Britain's industrialisation.

Economically, the Victorian age was a period of great prosperity and increasing wealth. The changes and developments brought by the industrial revolution favoured the lives of the upper/bourgeoisie class. Furthermore, it raised their standard of living. The industrial revolution also gave rise to the middle class of varying levels of wealth and comfort. On one hand, socio-economic snobbery, pretentious living and hypocrisy became the social markers of behaviour of the high society. But on the other hand, the life of poor factory workers, adults as well as children, was made miserable as a result of the contemporary factory system. Daily wages being very low, even small

children had to work for hours to support their family under inhuman working conditions. The increasing industries and emigration of cottagers from villages to cities in search of jobs, resulted in the increase of industrial slums – the greatest menace of the nineteenth century England. In these slums, factory workers with their families lived in inhospitable and deplorable conditions – without proper water, lighting, and drainage system. Consequently, the poor lot suffered from various diseases such as cholera, malaria, with no proper medication and health scheme provided to them. As a result, the mortality rate among them, became very high. Drunkenness in order to alleviate their misery became a major evil in cities and a chief cause of crime and ruin of these families. To check these conditions, several co-operative movements were started which made people conscious of their rights and independence. Britain was seen to be moving towards a new social consensus. But, on the whole the society was materialistic, selfish and hypocritical, governed by utilitarian motives. All these aspects of the Victorian society are very well depicted in the novels of Charles Dickens, as well as of other writers, which are taken up for analysis in the subsequent chapters of this study.

The early decades of the nineteenth century were years of great religious beliefs wherein the puritan attitude to life and conduct was inculcated. However, the increasing scientific discoveries and the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, challenged the religious beliefs of the people and led educated men to rethink about their faith and religion. This

conflict between science and religion caused much unhappiness in the lives of the common people. Thus, on the religious front the Victorian era became a vortex of religious controversy – loss of faith and skepticism/doubt.

The political system of Victorian England was also undergoing a great change. Democracy, bureaucracy, collectivism were steadily advancing and creating a stronghold in the political set-up. The strong monarchy was gradually giving way to the parliamentary mode of governance. The political situation in England remained unbalanced for much of the nineteenth century, with the scale always tilted in favour of the propertied class. Bulwer Lytton in 1833 declared that:

> We live in an age of visible transition – an age of disquietude and doubts – of the removal of time-worn landmarks, and the breaking up of the hereditary elements of society – old opinions, feelings – ancestral customs and institutions are crumbled away, and both the spiritual and temporal worlds are darkened by the shadows of change. (James 11)

The impact of these transitions and changes had a far reaching effect on the literature of the age. Literature being the mirror of life could not remain impervious to the mood and spirit of the Victorian times. But before discussing the literature of the Victorian era we should glance at the literature of the period that preceded it i.e. Romantic Age. The tendency of the romantic period was of emotional intensity coupled with imaginative felicity. The appeal of

such literature is to the heart rather than to the intellect. For the romantics, nature was the main source of inspiration and as well as of refuge from the humdrum, monotonous existence and poetry was the major literary form adopted to express the poet's feelings. But by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the creative force of the romantics began to exhaust and attention of the writers turned to other sources for inspiration. Moreover, the average Englishman recognised that since a long time they had been mute spectators to a phase of moral life where sensibility and imagination reigned supreme. Thus, the anxiety born out of excess of romanticism gave way to its alternative sequence i.e. rationalism. After the rule of emotions, dreams and the baring of the soul came the time for reason and truth to prevail. Realism as a mode of expression was given greater latitude and a careful style was emphasised. The general taste of the age tended to favour the search for truth in art. So, the Victorian age became the age of realism in literature. Novels became the best medium for the expression of such a spirit. Writers such as, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot wrote realistic novels. Their works were a replica of the society, the characters and settings were realistically drawn, the aim being to hold a mirror to the society:

> The influence of these three writers is reflected in all the minor novelists of the Victorian Age. Thus, Dickens is reflected in Charles Reade, Thackeray in Anthony Trollope, and George Eliot's psychology finds artistic expression in George Meredith. (Long 512-

513)

Dickens is a realist, in the manner he deals with the issues and problems of his times in his novels. For example, *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) highlights social problems such as the New Poor Law of 1834, crime, and poverty. In a brief section of *David Copperfield* (1849) he presents the condition of the children in a blacking warehouse. *Hard Times* (1854) is truly an industrial novel which focuses upon issues such as strikes and lockouts in factories. *Bleak House* (1852-53) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65), give us an insight into the social hierarchy and class division of the London society. If *Little Dorrit,* deals with the injustices and persecution of poor debtors then *Nicholas Nickleby*, foregrounds the abuses of charity school and tyrannical school masters. His novels definitely belong to the class of problems novels.

Thackeray has a keen eye for social pretensions, for the difference between the actual and professed motives, for all the hypocrisies which the people of the high society adopt to hide their true intentions. All this is very clearly brought out in his novel *Vanity Fair* (1847-48). It depicts the way in which demands of society operate on human character and other way round as well, and finally the consequences of such conditions. In *Pendennis* (1849-50), too, his satire on the society continues. As a realist and a moralist, he tries to give a 'true' picture of the society of his times with its shams, deceptions and vanities. A cynic at heart, he satirises the snobbery of the society of his times.

George Eliot, a realist of her own kind, was more concerned with moral problems of character. Her outlook is a moral one, as Long confirms "all her novels aim to show in individuals the play of universal moral forces and . . . to establish the moral law as the basis of human society" (305). She uses her knowledge of psychology, physiology, sociology, and history in her works to present the objective reality. She was familiar with and responsive to the varied social contexts in which nineteenth century man could live. In *Middle March* (1871-72), different characters living in different types of society are shown in interrelationships and through this intersection each character learns the truth about himself as a result of what happens to him. Thereby, presenting a microcosm of the real world.

However, this very notion of realism which emerged dominant by the mid-nineteenth century was subjected to scrutiny and interrogation. Stephen Prickett writes about authors of realistic fiction that:

> As they tried to do justice to the richness and complexity of their world they shade off imperceptibly into fantasy, which fulfill their desire for a better and more unified reality. (3)

This shift from realism to fantasy in literature is followed by writers in both prose e.g. Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland,* and poetry e.g. Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market,* Thomas Hood's *Miss Killmansegg and her Precious Leg.* But it is more clear and better developed in prose, as prose

provided greater scope and a bigger platform for the working of the fantasy. According to Stephen Prickett, the reasons for development of fantasy in the age of realism were:

> One is the idea of the *Gothic*; another is a revival of religious mysticism and a renewed feeling for the numinous- the irrational and mysterious elements in the religious experience: a third is the purely human revulsion against the squalid and degrading conditions of the early industrial revolution. In all three we can trace that curious ambivalence between imagination and fantasy that was to haunt the Victorian consciousness, and turn it inwards towards the creation of dreamworlds. (12-13)

In broad terms, fantasy literature includes all that is magical, supernatural, bizarre, strange, extraordinary or impossible. It deals with fairy tales, myths, folklores, legends, and stories of superhuman heroes, mysterious creatures and places, of time travel, hallucination and dreams. However, this is just a workable definition of fantasy with a plethora of possibilities to be invested in.

Brian Stableford in the introduction to *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature* has written that "fantasy is the faculty by which simulacra of sensible objects can be reproduced in the mind: the process of imagination" (xxxv). Rosemary Jackson views fantasy as a "literature of subversion". In her book on fantasy she includes that:

> Schneider had claimed the fantastic as dramatizing 'the anxiety of existence whilst Caillois described it as a form which was stranded between a serene mysticism and a purely humanistic psychology.' (Jackson 5)

Several critics and authors have described and defined fantasy in different ways, in accordance to the way it has been used in literature.

If we trace the evolution of fantasy in English literature, it is as old as literature itself but its form and modes have changed with time. In the earlier times, the fantasy stories: fairy tales, myths, folklores, and morality plays were passed on to the future generations through the oral tradition. These stories relied heavily on the fantastic elements, such as, supernatural beings and anthropomorphic (talking) animals, humans with extraordinary powers, magical and other worlds, personified vices and virtues to capture the interest of the people. All these elements are integral to the fantasy genre and recur in fantasies of different eras. Since the fourteenth century, fantasy stories were adapted to the written mode, employing all literary forms for expression and communication. The earliest example that can be considered as a written fantasy is Caxton's *Reynard the Fox* (1481). It was among the earliest printed books. Some important books from the sixteenth and seventeenth century that have claim to the fantasy mode and elements are Sydney's *Arcadia* (1590), Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1589-90), Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream (1595), *As You Like it* (1600), *Hamlet* (1601), *Macbeth* (1605), *The Tempest* (1611), Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).

With the development of the novel genre in the eighteenth century, fantasy found a perfect medium of expression. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) are some very famous examples. *Robinson Crusoe* is a pragmatic and naturalistic fantasy while *Gulliver's Travels* uses satire as its fantasy mode. Beside these, there is not much done in fantasy form until mid-nineteenth century. It was only in the middle of the eighteenth century with the beginning of gothic revival credited to Horace Walpole, who with his architectural fantasia at Strawberry hill, got the inspiration for the first gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). This novel had two elements that were to become the staple ingredients of the nineteenth century fantasy: a monster and dream like atmosphere. Walpole's *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1766-1772), contained a totally imaginary and non-sensical world. These elements of gothic fiction were later developed in the fantasies of the Victorian period; though it was the age of realism but some of the best fantasies of English literature were produced during this period. In the Victorian era, gothic ceased to be the dominant genre, yet it realised its most creative phase through the fantasy novels. The mood and themes of the gothic novels – their morbid obsession with death and mourning rituals, had a great influence on the Victorian writers (fantasists as well as realists). The gloomy atmosphere and melodrama of gothic fiction was transposed by them into a

more urban and contemporary setting. Dickens' Christmas Books (1843-48) are the best example that illustrates this aspect. In MacDonald's *Phantastes* (1858), the setting is not urban but the atmosphere of gloom, terror, and mystery, associated with gothic literature, pervades the novel. The influence of gothic novelists – Walpole, Lewis, Maturin, Radcliffe is evident in the works of the writers of the Victorian age. The writings of Mrs. Gaskell, Brontè sisters, Edgar A. Poe, too, have made use of gothic themes, atmosphere, setting and features in their respective works. Thus, we can say that along with the prevailing realism of the Victorian era, there developed a much stranger undercurrent, a non-realistic one, which included the influence of gothic elements/tradition. It was camouflaged but constantly present and hence the roots of Victorian fantasies can be said to lie in the revival of gothic fiction.

As discussed earlier, Victorian era was the age of great development that changed every aspect of Victorian life. But, despite these developments, it was the age of strict morality where puritan attitude to life was inculcated and there were many restrictions imposed on the expression of one's feelings. Even in literature, writers could not fully express their desires, feelings and thoughts. Realistic fiction did not provide the medium through which writers could express there dissatisfaction with the prevailing conditions. If they tried to do so, the fiction became too didactic, tiring and stiff. So, writers adopted a different form – fantasy, to articulate what could not be said through the dominant realistic order due to the social constraints. Stephen Prickett writes,

"the rich development of fantasy within the period is in some way the product of social repression and inhibition" (37).

In the fantasy literature, writers do not have to follow the conventions of realistic fiction. They can easily do away with the unities of time, place, and action, refuse to follow chronology. There is no distinction between animate and inanimate objects; even inanimate objects have identity and opinions of there own, and they reflect morally on their relationships with the human beings. Thus, the fantasy mode allowed the writers to convey their greatest fears and express their hidden desires. It brought to surface the "unseen and the unsaid of a culture." According to Prickett, fantasy became "ultimately the most philosophic form of fiction, giving scope to man's deepest dreams and most potent ideas" (3).

The hallmark of Victorian fantasy was the acceptance of the the logic of fantasy working as well as the acknowledgment of the fictitious nature of the work. Fantasy did not serve in opposition to the Victorian realism but in addition to it. It posits a different reality of a fantasy world - separate from ours, or a hidden fantasy side of our own world created by the author to communicate his individual interpretation. Thus, fantasy helped these writers to evolve a new language to fulfill the desire for a better and more unified reality. It showed "the way towards a new kind of thinking and feeling" as well as expressed "the more mysterious sides of our own world, otherwise not to be seen at all" (Prickett 3). The fantasy genre during the Victorian times included

both the modern genre and its traditional antecedents; the authors drawing inspiration from elements of traditional works for their own writings.

Victorian fantasy found its way into children's literature, which had its source in the romantic glorification of the imagination and the child. This changing point of view about the child, roused people's interest in children's literature. In this area, the first successful step was Edger Taylor's (two volume) translations of *German Popular Stories* (1823-26). With these stories, began the craze for fairy tales which stimulated an increase in translation of fairy tales throughout the nineteenth century. These tales with their rules of magic, reward for virtues and punishment for vices, greatly appealed to the Victorian psyche. A genre developed in which animals and inanimate objects could speak of their lives and reflect morally on their involvement with humans. Till 1860s, the fantasy stories such as Robert Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1842), Francis Paget's *The Hope of the Katzekopfs* (1844), John Ruskin's *The King of Golden River* (1851) and several others had adults and not children as the centre of action. Moreover, these stories were full of moral lessons applicable to adults. It was only around 1860 when the idea of "beautiful child" and childhood – as a separate state – took hold of Victorian minds that children were made the centre of action. These stories were written to amuse children rather then to instruct them. In the fantasies written after the 1860s, the character moved from our world to another – the fantastic one, while in the earlier fantasies such as *Snow White, The Pied Piper of Hamelin,*

the character remained in the same world, whether our own real world or the imaginative one, throughout the story. The structure of such tales was loose, chaotic, and dream like.

The variety of non-realistic techniques that the fantasy writers adopted included non-sense, dreams, visions, creation of other world, and time travel. The fantasy writers with the help of these techniques evolved a new language and a novel approach for a new kind of human thinking and feeling which could "hold a mirror to the shadowy and more mysterious side of are own" (Prickett 3) world. The Victorian writers have used fantasy both in poetry and prose as shown and discussed. However, the primary focus of this study is in fantasy fiction.

While scanning the literary horizon of the Victorian era, one comes across a number of important writers who have used the fantasy mode/fantasy elements in their writings. A few prominent names stand out for their remarkable usage and contribution to the fantasy genre. Their unique manner of adopting and adapting the fantasy mode for the expression of their personal commitment and emotional conditioning, transforms it into a distinctive art form. Some of these distinguished authors are Charles Dickens, George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, and Lewis Carroll. In the present study, due to the constraints of research and limitation of space, only some popular fantasy novels by these authors, have been selected for analysis which do justice to their claim to distinction and contribution to the fantasy genre:

1. Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and other Christmas Books (1845-48).
2. George MacDonald's *Phantastes* (1858) and Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* (1863).
3. Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through The Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1872).

Charles Dickens, though a realist has used a variety of fantastic elements in his Christmas Books to deal with two of his recurrent themes, social injustice and poverty, the relation between the two, and their cause and effect. For this purpose he relies heavily on the gothic tradition. Social evils are represented through gothic convention as horrific, melodramatic, demonic and 'other'. His "innumerable double and partial identities, his frequent use of synechdoche, representing 'characters' as fragmented bodies . . . represent a world threatening to drift towards something 'other'" (Jackson 133). His technique of concentrating on juxtaposition of succession of highly emotive images allows his narrative to move at a great pace. He employs satire in his Christmas books to comment upon the issues and problems of his age and to make people realise their mistakes and reform their follies.

George MacDonald is ranked among the greatest fantasy writer of the Victorian period. A source of inspiration for many of the authors of the twentieth century, he is considered by C.S. Lewis of having the ability and power "to baptise your imagination." His fantasies show his dissatisfaction

with the real familiar world and the search for something other. His fantasies like, Carroll, rely heavily on mirrors, portraits, doors, apertures which open into another fantastic world. *Phantastes* (1858), traces the journey of its narrator/protagonist, Anodos into the world of fairyland. And through this journey, MacDonald preaches moral values for the spiritual growth of man. In this work, he uses all the five senses to bring to life the inanimate objects. In *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) he presents a subterranean world inhabited by fearsome goblins. In *The Lilith* (1895), we enter the other world through the mirror. Here the juxtaposition of the real with the 'other' world shows our own in a new light. Of all these fantasies, the one to have survived the test of time is *Phantastes.* It is the most recognised and popular work of MacDonald which established him as a major fantasy writer. His book, *The Princess and the Goblin* was written for children and *Lilith* in comparision to *Phantastes* is considered to be an inferior work. Moreover, only *Phantastes* relates to the topic of this research study, hence, it is taken up for analysis as being the most representative and popular of MacDonald's fantasy writings.

Charles Kingsley's fantasy has a moral and allegorical basis. His *Water Babies* (1863) is basically a "theological allegory" and an example of "inverted didacticism" (Prickett 141). According to Stephen Prickett, this book proclaims its allegorical status in almost every line and incident. Kingsley, worked on it as it came to him but his easy flowing style in fact conceals a carefully worked out structure. The blend of two opposite traditions – the didactic and the absurd

– produces a complex and highly organised artistic structure. Kingsley uses satire, digressions and deliberately juxtaposed incongruities to reflect on the organic structure of natural things. By means of bold technical inversions his "romantic Platonism" (Prickett 141) reached its culmination in *The Water Babies*. The narrator is impersonal, omniscient, and is in complete authority. There is least emotional involvement in the tale. He uses the light tone of fairy tales to convey his message. The story also begins and concludes like a traditional fairy tale with the moral attached at the end. In the novel he constantly refers to the cleanliness of Tom which is both at the physical and spiritual level. It is a successful blend of two opposite traditions the didactic/moralising and the absurd. The impact of the book was so strong (in its time) that it is often credited for passing of the Chimney Sweeper's Act of 1846, which restricted the use of small boys as chimney sweepers.

Lewis Carroll's use of fantasy imbued with humour, delight in pun and irony, and double meaning, gave it an entire new colouring and a new art form. His Alice Books, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Alice through the Looking-Glass* (1872), "have a unique standing in the category of whimsical, nonsense literature from the western world" (Bose xii). He "discovered the possibility of quite different rules from those of the prevailing consensus: the rule of "Nonsense"" (Prickett 109) which acts as a device for making unsaid 'said'. "His snark, boojum, jabberwocky, uggug . . . are all mere signifiers without an object. They are invented and inverted 'nonsense' (non-sense) words" (Jackson

40). Alice books are full of such nonsense words and nonsense verses. He creates an extraordinary imaginative universe, in which Alice finds herself, when she falls through the rabbit hole or passes through the looking glass. She meets animals that could speak and behave like human beings: every inanimate object – playing cards, chess pieces, mutton leg etc; is endowed with human attitude and comments on its relation with Alice. Carroll relies on dream technique for this purpose. His fondness for – mathematical games, puzzles, logic, paradoxes, magic tricks, riddles, and every variety of word play, especially puns, anagrams, inversions, non-sequitur, jokes, and acrostic verse – is evident in the Alice Books. Being a mathematician, he plays with the rules of Mathematics, Geography, signs and time in Alice Books. Carroll employs satire, parody, thinly veiled allegory as a medium to reflect upon the problems of the Victorian England.

In this research study, Charles Dickens and Lewis Carroll have been analysed in separate chapters while George MacDonald and Charles Kingsley are dealt in a single chapter. This is done because in the case of Dickens and Carroll, a collection of works is taken up for study, while only a single work of MacDonald (*Phantastes*) *and* Kingsley (*The Water Babies*) is considered for detailed analysis. The rationale behind the selection of these particular novels (by MacDonald and Kingsley) is that they both can be read as Christian fantasies and moral allegories. Furthermore, as both these writers were priests with strong evangelical leanings, they through their works wanted to uplift man

– morally and spiritually. The aim and objective of these selected novels is significantly corresponding in nature, hence they have been dealt together.

Besides these major writers taken up for this research work, there are others as well, who also have made great contributions to fantasy writing but cannot be dealt in detail in the limited space of the thesis. However, they have been discussed in brief to give a complete picture of the Victorian fantasy writing.

Thomas Hood's fantasy, depends on the variety and range with which he uses pun, ironic satire, and wit in his works such as *Miss Killmansegg and her Precious Leg* (1840). It is an attack on society dehumanized by greed. Morality, social satire, buffoonery and the grotesque are all intertwined in this poem. His puns are the expression of the unresolved contradictions in the society.

Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* (1846), a remarkable work in the fantasy literature, consists entirely of drawings and limericks. Limericks are Lear's basic form of fantasy. They reveal his use of concealed and unsuspected puns, zany humor, grotesqueness, juxtaposed word sequences, non-sense words, word play, and word abuse. He uses words for the effect of the sounds they produce. His non-sense is satirical and he is well-known for his silly irony or well timed non-sequitur. For him, fantasy was a way of dealing with the feeling of insecurity and loneliness, and it brings out his private guilt, fear, and obsessions.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854) brings forth social issues, such as the role of women and industrialisation. Through her ghostly and ghastly tales of estrangement, haunting, isolation, fear, sexual victimisation, suicide, and murder, she expresses her disillusionment with the idea of historical progress. *The Old Nurse's Story* (1852), *The Crooked Branch* (1859), *The Grey Woman* (1861) and other fantasies, reveal this thought of Mrs. Gaskell. Her characters frequently refer to fairy tales, myths, and other such fictional forms of writings. These tales allude to geographical locations outside the one, her characters inhabit. She does not transcend reality but erodes and re-forms it.

Christina Rossetti in her fantasy poem, *Goblin Market* (1859), constructs the appearance of both, the Goblin and the girls, through sound imagery. She emphasises movements, sounds, and rhythm, with minimal physical description to probably reflect the girl's view of the outside world: confusing, distorted, and inhuman. The imagery of the forbidden fruit refers to female sexuality and female education. In her works, she refers to the condition of women in Victorian England and emphasises on female education.

Samuel Butler graduated from Victorian worries to a full scale attack on the whole Victorian ethos as he understood it. *Erewhon* (1872) and *Erewhon Revisited* (1901) are satires on the Victorian concept of duty, morality, and religion through a witty portrayal of a Utopia which conveys criticism with the maximum amount of provocative irreverence. Utopia, a land from "nowhere",

provided Butler the context to play with his ideas that interested him in the way he wished. In these works, he modifies and combines the elements from the tradition of Utopian fiction with that of the imaginary voyage. He introduces the marvellous and the fantastic, through the mysteriousness of the mountain range and the fear that its very mention arouses in the natives. Butler, highlights the Victorian problems by creating a contrasting world of Erewhonians, such as, the Erewhon's society is free of any competitiveness, ambition, or greed; their environment is free from any contamination caused by the presence of machines; their cities are clean and comfortable and with good and well cooked food in abundance. All this is a satire on the conditions of cities in Victorian England; a result of the industrial revolution as well as a reference to the hungry forties.

Rudyard Kipling is a natural fantastic. Most of his fantasies are children's books. However, people realised later that they were meant for grown ups as well. From the beginning, Kipling was a man haunted by other worlds and his interest in psychic phenomena, provided the raw material of the other worlds on which his fantasies relied upon. As his art developed, he became progressively more skilled in suggesting the intersection of different planes of reality as glimpsed in *The Jungle Books* (1894 and 1895). Like Carroll's fantasies, his *Jungle Books* too, have anthropomorphic animals who bring up Mowgli, the protagonist, as their own child and teach him the ways and laws of the jungle. This book, though free of any didacticism, has an

underlying reality. His other fantasies, *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910) include alternative worlds in which the worlds of child, adult, fairy – enrich and comment upon the other. These books, use the dream technique and magic trips of people from the past to create the fantastic worlds. They have an allegorical framework and their compact and comprehensive plots work through brilliant and haunting images.

William Morris' other worlds are linked to the real through allegorical associations and never or rarely intrude into or interrogate it. For example, *The Water of Wonderous Isles* (1896) is a story set in a utopia, a historical medieval world of beautiful ladies and chivalric knights. Morris' works relie on the power of individual movement or scene rather than plot.

Edith Nesbit in *The Magic City* (1910), reveals the effect of industrialisation through the story of Gaint Sloth (anthropomorphic animal) becoming a slave to a machine that he himself wished to have. Nesbit's magic is often mysterious but not arbitrary or meaningless. *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) and *Hardling Luck* (1907) have time travel to past and future. Her fantasies have an underlying emphasis on an ordered moral world. She laid stress on permanent values of honour, truth, loyalty, love, and self sacrifice.

It is important to remember that the fantasy genre that developed in the Victorian period was not totally against the prevalent tendency of realism but in addition to it. Writers through fantasy brought to the surface, the reality and then left it to the readers to interpret it. Because of this reason, these works

remained unexamined as serious literature and became categorised as children's literature. Fantasy is often criticised as the genre of nonsense, pure escapism or entertainment but it is something that brings out the harsh realities of the time. Manlove outlines the 'character' of fantasy as:

> A fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible world, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms. (10-11)

The popular novels selected for analysis in this research work, acquaint us with this 'character' of fantasy (alternate reality) and thus pave way to a better understanding and approach to the real world. The aim or purpose of the present study is to show that the marvellous/magical/wondrous/fantastic is but another way of dealing with reality. In the hands of this group of novelists, the shift of the narrative mode from realistic to the fantastic may be explained with the help of an observation of Prickett about George MacDonald:

> realism and fantasy are two sides of the same coin: the realism is as much an arbitrary and literary convention as the fantasy, and that fantasy is as dependent on mundane experience as realism. (191)

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Chapter One

Charles Dickens: Christmas Books

(I) The Christmas Carol, The Chimes, and The Cricket on the Hearth

(II) The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain

CHAPTER 1

(I)

A CHRISTMAS CAROL, THE CHIMES, AND THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH

Dickens was the great social realist of his times. He started his career as a journalist and later turned to novel writing. His novels, like his journalism, reflect the pressures and perplexities of his age. With his work he stirred the consciousness of his readers without disgusting them. He had the power to make his readers laugh and cry with his work. Humour and pathos is so much a part of his narrative style that helps him to depict the most wretched situation and character "in a manner, horrifyingly vivid to a sensitive adult, but unlikely to harm a young" (Dyson 14) innocent reader. Dickens sensibility made him a part of the crowd for whom he wrote. He felt all their joys and sorrows and made them his own. As an artist he combines the spirit of the comic, tragic and the satiric to add to the dramatic effect of his narrative. The serious purpose of his writing was to make his novel the instrument of morality and justice. As a writer, he hoped to correct the general selfishness, prejudices and injustices of the society, towards the poor and the downtrodden.

His vision is greatly affected by his troubled childhood memories as a lonely, disowned child and his traumatic suffering in the blacking warehouse at

the age of twelve. The pathetic, grotesque creatures, like Master Peter in *A Christmas Carol*, the beast waif in *The Haunted Man*, give us a glimpse into the authors' own boyhood days and family life. In such times of distress, the literature, especially children's books that he read, soothed and sustained him. He strongly believed that literature could help save others too. His writings reflect this fact and they are "profoundly shaped by that early reading and imagining, a shaping that has the fairy tale as its matrix" (Stone 3). In his novels, Dickens is in a constant search for solution to the problems of life. In doing so, he transformed the novels to incorporate a social vision beyond the limitation of mimesis that led to the creation of a world of speaking shadows: a world of gothic and prophetic vision. The Christmas Books are the best example of his fairy-tale world.

The link between painful memories and Christmas benevolence is fundamental to his Christmas stories. Painful memories, stir man's emotions to feel for others and all the protagonists of Christmas Books exemplify this fact:

> Dickens' own first literary treatment of Christmas appeared in *Bell's Life in London* on 27 December 1835 as a part of a series of sketches entitled 'Scenes and Characters' . . . . at the beginning of the sketch, Dickens refers to . . . those who have suffered personal sorrows, wrongs, and misfortunes which this great anniversary occasion must inevitably bring to mind. The theme of dealing, or failing to deal, with painful memories subsequently becomes a leading one in nearly all Dickens's Christmas writings. (Dickens, *Carol* xiv-xv)

They centre around the theme of kindness, perseverance, forgiveness, tenderness, restitution, reconciliation, the power of self-sacrificing love, importance of memory and imagination to the moral health of the individual. The Christmas writings, emphasise upon the importance of home and family love and teach spiritual and moral values. They were "absolutely impossible . . . to be separated from the exemplification of the Christian virtues and the inculcation of the Christian precepts . . . in everyone of them there is an express text preached on, and that text is always taken from the lips of Christ" (Dickens, *Carol* xxvii). Dickens did not want his Christmas stories to be didactic, so he chose fantasy as a medium to convey his message. In order to do justice to the purpose of his writings, he adopted all literary forms to express himself – allegories, satires, burlesques, fables, and supernatural stories.

The Christmas Books stand at the heart of his fantasy writings. The fantasy element in these narratives is highlighted by means of dream, enchantment, signs, symbolism, supernatural agents: ghost, goblin, phantom, spirit, double (*The Haunted Man*), inverted (*A Christmas Carol*), or partial selves (*The Chimes*); time travel, personification, animism, and the like. The environment in these books becomes a constituent element in the story:

> His environment constantly exceeds its material limitation. Its mode of existence is altered by the human purpose and deeds it circumscribes, and intrudes upon the soul. (Ford 218)

The physical surroundings become a manifestation of the changes in the psyche of the character. In *A Christmas Carol,* the foggy, gloomy atmosphere changes to clear, bright sunlight with the redemption of Scrooge. In *The Cricket on the Hearth,* stormy weather clears away with clarification of John's doubts and "in the stage of the Carrier's thoughts, the moon burst out, and shone brightly in the sky. Perhaps some calm and quite light had risen also, in his mind" (Dickens, *Books* 212).

The vividness and magnitude of the created world in his fantasies is remarkable. The fairy tale structure allowed him a greater scope to play with his imagination, to show evil, misery, drudgery, horror and yet be happy:

> This structure was of immense value to Dickens . . . He could now show misery and horror and yet do so in a context of joyful affirmation . . . He could introduce the most disparate scenes, events, and visions without losing the reader's confidence . . . He could make his characters and events real when he wished them real, magical when he wished them magical. He could effect overnight conversions which could be justified aesthetically. He could teach by parable rather than exhortation. (Stone 120)

It gave him the freedom to refer and to dramatise the social beliefs and evils in an artistic/disguised manner. The crimes that Dickens mainly refers to are the

crimes against the poor, neglected child and the deprived lot of the society. These narratives brought alive the evils of the industrial system. He exposes the moral dilemmas of the nation through a style that is inimitable in its pictorial and visual effects. He interrogates as well as shows the remedies to the established evil practices of his day. He mocks, jeers a well as questions them. And what a way to do so – with the help of the fantasy mode. To juxtapose the reality with its antithetic mode - alternate reality. Dickens serious purpose was to make his fiction the instrument of morality and justice. As a writer, his aim was to mend the attitude of selfishness and injustice towards the oppressed and the downtrodden.

In his Christmas Books, he dealt with the contemporary problems and the loneliness of city-dwellers; alienation being the inevitable condition of the urban man. A unique quality of his fantasies is that he conceals in order to reveal. He makes the need of something felt through its absence. His method made his contemporary society to think, what it needed and what it increasingly lacked. Dickens was a great social reformer and his novel/fantasies are a vehicle for the required social change.

Dickens wrote five Christmas Books: *A Christmas Carol, The Chimes, The Cricket on the Hearth, The Battle of Life,* and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain.* With the exception of *The Battle of Life,* all the other four Christmas Books employ the fairy-tale mechanism. His imaginative outlook of life and his love and romance for life make way for these heart touching

fantasies, inspired by the spirit of Christmas. They are so endowed and enriched with meanings that they seem to cry out for analysis. Fireside story telling was a popular and important part of Christmas tradition. Thus, these Christmas Books served the double purpose – of being part of the ritual as well as fulfilling the author's purpose of writing the story. They aim to correct the malaises of the age – the general selfishness, injustice, and insensitivity of the society and its people. All the Christmas Books with their Christmas setting were published at Christmas time. Dickens, deliberately chose this time as:

> He felt that at the Christmas season men's heart are softened and receptive. At that time, by invoking the spirit of Christmas and utilizing the magic of fairy stories, by bringing his readers through such means closer to their childhood innocence and openness, he could steal into their hearts and move them to change. (Stone 129)

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A Christmas Carol: In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas

Dickens' first and the most popular Christmas Book *A Christmas Carol: In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas* was first published on 19th December, 1843. It was an immediate success and since then has attained the

status of a myth. *Christmas Carol* is a result of sudden inspiration from an event in October 1843:

> Speaking at the first annual soirée of the Manchester Athenaeum . . . Dickens dwelt on the terrible sights he had seen among the juvenile population in London's jails and doss-houses and stressed the desperate need for educating the poor. This occasion seems to have put into his mind the idea for a story . . . which should help to open the hearts of the prosperous and powerful towards the poor and powerless but which should also bring centrally into play the theme of memory. (Dickens, *Carol* xviii)

As a book, it attacked the rationale of industrialism and the materialistic society of Victorian England in a disguised manner.

Ebenezer Scrooge, the protagonist of the story, is an old man, owner of a warehouse. The name of his firm was Scrooge and Marley. Marley his only friend, companion, and partner had died seven years ago on Christmas Eve. But his name stood "years afterwards, above the warehouse door" (34). As the sole possessor of the business, Scrooge answered to both names Marley as well as his own. He is presented as a typical Victorian economic man, isolated from society, devoid of humanity – engrossed in the art of making money. Everybody recognises him but no one ever cares to even greet him. This does not affect Scrooge as this was what he liked to be – alone. He is a man devoid of sensitivity, has no feelings even for his only nephew, Fred. At Christmas

time, he neither wished nor visited him. He considered Christmas celebrations as waste of time and money, and the people who enjoyed it as fools. He feels that for poor people like Fred and his clerk, Bob Cratchit, Christmas was but a time to pay bills (without money) and for settling down other matters. Miserly and selfish, Scrooge refuses to do charity for the poor and the needy. He underpays Bob and denies him a holiday even on Christmas day. Apathetic and impassive to the sufferings of others, he lives a life of utter loneliness.

One Christmas Eve, while returning to Marley's old chamber (where he lived) Scrooge momentarily saw the face of Marley on the front door knocker. Later, the same night, he saw a ghostly hearse on the staircase. These uncanny occurrences so frightened him that he double locks himself and bolts all doors and windows of the house – a thing which he had never done before. Notwithstanding all the precautions, while sitting alone by the fireside, he is confronted by Marley's ghost at night. The ghost informs him that soon he would be visited by three Spirits of – Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to come. Thus, would begin his time travel.

The next night, Scrooge is met by the Spirit of Christmas Past, who takes him avisiting his earlier life. Back in the 'Past', his life is presented in a series of pictures. The first scene shows Scrooge as a neglected child left alone at school even during the holidays. He is then taken to Old Fezziwig's warehouse where he had been apprenticed as a young boy. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig were benevolent and loving people who cared for their workers and

celebrated Christmas with them. Next, Scrooge is transported to the youthful days of his life. The vision shows him sitting with a girl whom he had loved. But as money was all that mattered to him, she went away. Callous and careless towards relationships but careful of and caring for money, Scrooge did not stop her. By then his only relation and support – his sister also dies and he is shown all alone – bereft of friends and relations. Then the scene shifts to the house of the woman he loved. It shows her having a good time with her husband and children. Scrooge is made to witness the joy and ecstasy of family life that he has missed and never realised. Unable to endure this sight, he seizes the Ghost's extinguisher cap and presses it down upon its head with such force that it covers its entire form and thus the visitation to the 'Past' comes to an end. Emotionally exhausted, he sinks into a deep sleep.

On waking up again, he encounters the Ghost of Christmas Present. The scene is of Christmas festivities – where people, rich or poor, young or old, are busy in Christmas rejoicing. Scrooge is taken to Bob Cratchit's (his clerk) dwelling and made aware of his miserable condition. Bob's elder daughter Martha and his ten year son Peter, work to support their family. His other son Tiny Tim, is a sickly child who walks on crutches and has little hopes of survival. The Spirit introduces Scrooge to the inhospitable and inhuman living conditions of the slums. Next, Scrooge finds himself in the house of Fred (his nephew), who is celebrating Christmas with his wife, sisters-in-law, and friends. He hears them discussing him – as a man whose wealth gave him no

comfort. The Ghost takes Scrooge far and wide, visiting homes blessed with the joys of family togetherness and love. Everywhere the Spirit went it showered its benedictions of happiness. As the night progresses, the Spirit is shown growing older. From the folds of its robe, it brings out two children in wretched condition that "knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garments" (Dickens, *Carol* 92). The ghost informs Scrooge that the boy was "ignorance" and the girl "want" and stretching its hand towards the city, vanishes. Scrooge's inquiry about their dwelling place is met with empty air. In stretching its arm towards the city, the Ghost points to the fact that ignorance and want are the curse of developing industrial cities.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, fast-forwards into the 'Future' time zone. It shows Scrooge as a dead man and no one to lament on his death. The men of business (whom Scrooge thought appreciated his work ethics) were found laughing at his death. A man's wife who owed money to Scrooge, expresses her joy on learning of his death, though later she prays for forgiveness. His laundress, the charwoman, and the undertaker's man all take his belongings (while he lay dead on his bed) and sell them to a man, Joe, in the slums. His death becomes an opportunity for them to make money, to help themselves. The only emotion/sentiment that his death elicits from people is of pleasure. In direct contrast to the scene of his own "unwept" death is the death of Tiny Tim. His death is shown to be mourned and lamented by family and friends. The scenes and visions impact Scrooge deeply. Emotionally shaken

and distressed, he confesses to the Phantom a change of heart. He has learnt his lesson and promises to change the course of his future by becoming a better man. Holding his hands in prayer he feels a change in the Phantom's hood and dress: it shrinks, and dwindles and collapses into his bedpost. On waking up, Scrooge realises that he had been dreaming. However, the lesson had been learnt; realising all his past mistakes, he works towards the fulfillment of his promise made to the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come.

Thus, we see Scrooge amending his mistakes and redeeming himself. On Christmas Day, he cheerfully greeted everyone he met, visited Fred's family, made charity to the poor, presented Bob with a large turkey for Christmas dinner, raised his salary, and became friendly and helpful to his family. No more was he visited by the Spirits and lived upon the "Total Abstinence Principle" (Dickens, *Carol* 118).

Christmas Carol is a fantasy story. Dickens begins the book with the description of Marley's death and then drifts to a reference to the ghost of Hamlet's father. This scene prepares the readers for the bizarre events that are to take place later in the story. The author has adopted the elements of gothic literature for creating the fantastic effects in the story. The basic features of gothic literature are: setting in a castle or some dreary, gloomy place; an atmosphere of mystery and suspense; working of ancient prophecy, omens, portents, dreams, visions; supernatural beings and events; highly charged and overwrought emotions and surprises; the metonymy of gloom and horror.

Almost all of these elements have been employed by Dickens. The atmosphere of mystery, surprise, and horror is omnipotent in the novel and is enhanced by the description of the foggy weather and darkness. The fog in the novel represents Scrooge's state of mind and acts as a metaphor for mental darkness and confusion:

> Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened . . . The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slily down at Scrooge out of a gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards, as its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. (Dickens, *Carol* 39)

Scrooge's house has a wacky and mournful atmosphere of its own. It is an isolated building, situated far away from the rest of buildings. He lives in Marley's chamber which is described thus:

> They are a gloomy suite of room, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have played hide-and-seek with other houses, and have forgotten the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough. . . . The fog and frost so hung about the black old gateway of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold. (41)

The supernatural beings and events are an integral part of the story. Marley's ghost and the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come become agents of fantasy who help the story to move forward. Dickens uses these phantoms as a medium to depict the reality of his times. The happenings that befall Scrooge are far beyond the ambit of realism; the momentary appearance of Marley's face on the front door knocker of his house is extremely sinister and uncanny:

> Marley's face. . . . with ghostly spectacles turned up upon its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot-air: and though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible. (Dickens, *Carol* 42)

Dickens has made use of the entire gothic machinery to create the environment of gloom and terror. As the spectra of Marley enters Scrooge's chamber: the swinging of the bell on its own that started softly but soon converted to a loud, unbearable crescendo along with every bell in the house as Scrooge sat near the fireside; their sudden stopping is succeeded by a clanking noise from deep down below; the opening of the cellar-door wide with a booming sound, followed by a noise that becomes louder and louder near his door as the ghost of Marley makes its appearance wearing a chain made of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. Later, the air is filled with phantoms who all wore chains like Marley and produced

"incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory" (Dickens, *Carol* 50). They were wandering in restless haste and moaning and suddenly they and their voices fade away.

The author has used both the visual and aural effects - the swinging bells, clanking chains drawn by ghosts, approaching footsteps, sudden opening of door on its own, confused noises of lamentation, moaning and wailing sounds, and a sudden silence as the metonymy of gloom and horror. All these are effective devices to enhance and intensify the atmosphere of mystery and strangeness in the book.

Dickens has employed the dream technique to make possible what is unbelievable within the boundaries of realism. Subsequently, when Scrooge pleads and holds his hands in prayer to the Phantom of Christmas Yet to Come (in order to reverse his fate), the Phantom's hood and dress dwindles down into the bedpost, Scrooge realises that it was all a dream. He has made use of the element of magic in context of the extraordinary torch of the Ghost of Christmas Present. The incense in this torch has a miraculous quality to it:

> It was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carrier who had jostled each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good humour was restored directly. (77)

Supernatural elements are accompanied by surprise and bizarre happenings, and so the story is replete with them. Scrooge sleeping for a whole day and far into another night before the appearance of ghost of Christmas Past is unbelievable for Scrooge himself. The quickness of passing time and his (Scrooge) transition from one place to another in quick succession, his change of form and age is both astonishing and uncanny. It adds to the mood of surprise and wonder. The following incidents exemplify this effect:

> As the words were spoken, they [Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Past] passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. (Dickens, *Carol* 56)

> They [Scrooge and the Ghost of the Christmas Yet to Come] scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. (96)

> He [Scrooge] recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed. (102)

The horrifying, mysterious atmosphere arouses high, even overwrought emotions in the characters displayed through acts of screaming, crying, breathlessness, panic, and emotional speeches. Scrooge falls down on his knees and clasps his hands before his face in terror, when Marley's ghost removed the bandage tied round its head and allows its lower jaw to drop down on its

breast. At another place, he pleads with the spirit in a broken voice to remove him, to take him back, to leave him alone, to haunt him no longer as he could not bear anymore. After seeing the visions of his past at Mr. Fezziwig's warehouse, Scrooge behaves unlike himself and praises Mr. Fezziwig in words saturated with intense feelings:

> He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks . . . The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune. (Dickens. *Carol* 64)

In a later description, on seeing his own grave, Scrooge trembled, screamed and cried "Am *I* the man who lay upon the bed?" he cried, upon his knees" (108)

Dickens has adopted the mode of fantasy in order to present the harsh realities of Victorian times in a manner that they do not hurt the readers. Scrooge, the protagonist, represents the materialistic Victorian society; he had spent all his life in the pursuit of money and power, sacrificing the joys of friendship and relationship. His only companion and friend had been Marley. The depiction of Marley's ghost is an artistic wonder, a perfect embodiment of the Victorian spirit of materialism. Dickens describes Marley's ghost thus:

> The same face: the very same face. Marley in his pig-tail, usual waistcoat, tight, and boots . . . The chain he drew was clasped about

> his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought, in steel. His body was transparent: so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind. Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now. (Dickens, *Carol* 44)

The detailed description is a comment upon the Victorian age as a time of great industrial and material prosperity, but which in its wake brought about a moral and spiritual degeneration in the attitude and life of the people. Guided by the impulse of material greed and selfishness, capitalists/industrialists represented by Marley and Scrooge became busy in making monetary gains leading to the exploitation of their workers. The chains he drew, depict his financial prosperity while he was alive but after his death they became a burden on his soul. For making the profit, he forgot his duties towards his fellow beings and society:

> "Business!" cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!" (49)

Again, Scrooge's treatment of his clerk Bob Cratchit, represents the Victorian attitude of material greed and exploitation. The clerk is underpaid and terrified by his master. He is pressed to work under harsh and oppressive conditions and

there is no one to complain to. Scrooge's indifference to his workers is depicted in his miserly treatment of Bob by not providing enough coal for the fire place in the office, to keep him warm in the extreme cold weather.

The fairy tale like beginning "once upon a time" on a cold, foggy Christmas Eve, mentally prepares the reader to expect a narrative experience of awe and wonder; uncanny and bizarre happenings; occult and mysterious presentiments. Dickens intensifies the atmosphere with personification, animism, anthropomorphism. There is a fusion of blurring and juxtaposition of time; a blending of allegory, realism, fancy, and psychology. While describing Marley's Ghost and the front door knocker, Dickens relies on reciprocal metaphor – animate is treated as inanimate and vice-versa:

> The animation of inanimate objects suggests both the quaint gaiety of a forbidden life and an aggressiveness that has got out of control . . .
> . . . It is as if the life absorbed by thing had been drained out of people who have become incapable of their humanity. (Ford 214)

Thus, Dickens has succeeded in creating a perfect fairytale atmosphere:

> From the very beginning Dickens strikes a note of playful exaggeration that warns us this is no exercise in naturalism . . . The entire world of the story is an animistic one: the houses play hide-and-seek, door-knocker come to life, the tuning of a fiddle is "like fifty stomach aches." (277)

He uses fairy-tale techniques and effects with great skill, to depict the realities of his times. The splendour of the narrative art and imagination is best displayed in the telescoping of time and life of Scrooge, through the masterly presentation of the Spirit of the Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come. The very structure of the story goes to highlight the theme, the authorial intention and the perfect collusion of the romantic with the realistic. The different phases of Scrooge's life and his relation with his fellow beings are shown to the readers by the three Spirits of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come. These spirits become a vehicle to bring alive the reality of Victorian life. He has worked out every detail from the attire of these Spirits, to the atmosphere of the scene/time they represent in order to add to the authenticity of the presentation.

The Spirit of Christmas Past, takes us to the world before the industrial revolution. It was a world of "open country road, with fields on either hand" (Dickens, *Carol* 56). The clean and clear atmosphere breathed of freshness. The people of those times were close to 'nature'; they worked and lived in its company. In such idyllic surroundings, lived the pastoral man of the past contented and wholesome without worldly greed to dissatisfy and upset him. Thus we are introduced to:

> a strange figure– like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man . . . Its hair . . . was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a

> wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. . . . It wore a tunic of the purest white; and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand, . . . from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light. (Dickens, *Carol* 54-55)

The bright, clear jet of light is the light of knowledge which he wants to impart to Scrooge.

The Ghost of Christmas Past, carry Scrooge to his childhood days. It holds a mirror to the novelist's own childhood. A childhood marred by misery, drudgery, sufferings, and denial. Like Dickens, Scrooge is a neglected child, left alone in school even at Christmas time. He too was fond of reading fantasies and adventurous books like *Robinson Crusoe, Arabian Nights, Ali Baba*, which were his only friends and saved him from the loneliness of his life. But wants and needs of life, force him to leave school and work for his livelihood, as Dickens had to do. These harsh experiences turn him into a lonely, isolated, and a hardhearted man, unlike his creator who retained his good cheer and goodwill. Hard on the trail of accumulating wealth and power, epitomising the materialistic attitude of the Victorian society, he becomes ruthless and inhuman. He is so affected by his past painful experiences that in trying to triumph over them, he forgets them. He forgets what he felt when he was lonely and friendless. He chooses money over his love to overcome his fears; the greatest dilemma of the Victorian man:

> "It matters little," she said, softly. "To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me . . ."
>
> "What idol has displaced you?" he rejoined.
>
> "A golden one."
>
> "This is the even-handed dealing of the world!" he said. "There is nothing it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!" (Dickens, *Carol* 65)

Thus, the Ghost satirically attacks the society that had become insensitive to the needs and feelings of others through Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig's Christmas dinner and their healthy and loving relationship with the boys they apprentice:

> "A small matter," said the Ghost , "to make these folks so full of gratitude."
>
> "Small!" echoed Scrooge.
>
> The Spirit to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their heart in praise of Fezziwig . . .
>
> "Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?" (64)

Old Fezziwig's relationship with his apprentices is a moral lesson for the society that Scrooge represents. It is an attack on those who think that they have discharged their moral duties fully (towards the weak and the helpless of the society) through 'good work' by paying for the prisons, the workhouse, the

operation of the treadmill, and the Poor Law active in the nineteenth century for the protection of the needy people. The insensate Scrooge, thinks that such out-of-work and indigent sick were better dead; and this would also bring down the surplus population. He does not realise that in wishing for their death, he was only inviting disaster for the society in the long run. He fails to realise that his own greed and want for power and money was responsible for the misery of the poor and the downtrodden. The working class - the scum of society was the creation of people like Scrooge. The Ghost of Christmas Present reminds him that:

> "Man," said the Ghost, "if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, and what men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child . . . " (Dickens, *Carol* 82)

The Ghost of Christmas Present shows the condition of the society during the nineteenth century. It is a study in contrast to the picture presented by the Ghost of Christmas Past. The wholesome environment of the rural background has been replaced by the industrial slums of the cities:

> The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked with dingy mist, alf thawed, half frozen, whose heavier particles descended in a

> shower of sooty atoms . . . There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town. (Dickens, *Carol* 75)

The figure of the Ghost of Christmas Present too, is a grim reminder of the wretchedness of the times; symbolising a society doomed to a miserable future:

> was clothed in one simple deep green robe . . . This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare . . . Its feet . . . were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. . . . ancient sheath was eaten up with rust. (74)

Dickens through the Ghost of Christmas Present wants the readers to realise the condition of the labourers and the poor people, during the Victorian times. Bob Cratchit, the clerk has to take care of a large family of six children on his low income. Master Peter, his son has to work, so as to earn five-and-sixpence a week in order to support his family. Martha, his elder daughter, an apprentice at a milliner's has to work on low wages for hours to add to the household income. Through the example of Peter and Martha, Dickens reflects upon the condition of the poor labouring children, whose childhood was sacrificed at the altar of want. Instead of experiencing the joys of childhood, they had to vend their way through the unfriendly, harsh materialistic, adult world.

In an era of industrial development, poor workers including children, were forced to work under inhumane conditions in factories for sixteen to eighteen hours at a stretch for a paltry amount. The wages were not even sufficient to buy proper food for the family. In picturing the Cratchits dinner, Dickens refers to the 'Hungry Forties' -- a period of economic depression and severe food crisis. There were no laws to protect the poor and most of them were not even aware of such laws. The poor lived a life of ignominy in the most inhospitable conditions – lacking proper lightining, roads, and drainage system:

> The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery. (Dickens, *Carol* 98)

Such an environment became a breeding ground of diseases crippling, maiming, and killing both young and old. Bob's son Tiny Tim is a victim of this malaise.

Dickens intention is to highlight the indifference of the upper industrial class towards its labourers and employees. The Ghost of Christmas Present acts as a mouthpiece of the novelist, when it makes Scrooge notice the two children taken out from the foldings of its robe "a boy and girl. Yellow, meager, ragged,

scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility." Thus, he bewails the consequences of the industrial development:

> "They are Man's," said the Spirit . . . "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. (Dickens, *Carol* 94)

The stretched hand points to a city which was becoming unfit for the growth of the next generation: the neglected poor labourers, children without education, starvation, diseases, and death; a dismal scenario, dark and gloomy with no hope for the future. Thus, the ominous description of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come – "shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand" (95), condemns the future, to be malignant, if the prevailing conditions remained unaltered. If the Laws for the protection of the poor and the Regulation of working conditions in the industries would not have been implemented in the Victorian Age, the future would have been the same as shown by the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come. Thus, we may safely affirm, that the humanitarian reforms of the nineteenth century owe much to the (literary) efforts of Charles Dickens.

At Christmas and New Year's time Dickens did not want his readers to be unhappy, disillusioned and disheartened so he offers them a hopeful and happy future in the image of a reclaimed/redeemed Scrooge. Dickens' anguish and pain comes out loud and clear in the guise of a fairy tale. Nothing could have been a better and more forceful mode of realisation and an awakening than to employ the oblique method of attack – fantasy – to mirror the reality of the times.

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The Chimes: A Goblin Story of Some Bells That Rang an Old Year Out and a New Year In

The phenomenal success of *Christmas Carol* inspired Dickens to produce a series of Christmas Books in the years to come. In the successive year of *Christmas Carol*, he wrote *The Chimes: A Goblin Story of Some Bells That Rang an Old Year Out and a New Year In.* It appeared on 16th December, 1844. The novel centres on the theme of charity, kindness and compassion for the poor, human goodness, and mutual love.

The Chimes is a story about Toby Veck also known as Trotty an old, poor ticket porter who stands by the church in all weathers, good or bad, to earn his bread. On the last day of the year, Trotty is visited by his daughter

Meg and her fiancée Richard, at his "chill post" and is informed about their marriage on New Year's Day. They had been engaged for the past three years but could not marry due to their poverty. As they sat celebrating this news at the doorsteps of a house, three Gentlemen (upper class) came out. Seeing the three rejoicing despite their want, they made fun of their lot and insulted them by advancing their parochial views about the poor. Their belief was that the 'poor' were the cause of all evils in the society and hence should not be allowed any rights – not even to marry. They pronounced such marriage(s) to be a wrong – a proliferation of evil, for the children born would add to the misery and want of their situation, take to a life of crime and thus become a menace and a burden on the society. Dickens' usual device of introducing odious characters makes vice more hateful by contrasting it with the innocence and virtue of others. His fondness for fine sentiments finds expression in incidents full of dramatic appeal. The melodramatic intent accounts for the success of reaching out to the people (both rich and poor) who had become accustomed to their way of life, impervious to the need for change. The harsh and unkind words of the Gentlemen, dispel the brief moments of joy of the happy couple, leaving them in a state of unbated helplessness and gloominess. Meanwhile, one of the gentlemen, the Alderman orders Trotty to carry a letter to Sir Joseph Bowley – a politician and pays him sixpence for the job.

The introduction of Sir Joseph Bowley is a narrative ploy to expose his claim to be the "Poor Man's Friend and Father". His life's actions in no way

substantiate the claim. He wants "the poor to be subservient and behave like dutiful children" (Stone 127) by paying their rents regularly and being punctual in their dealings. At Sir Bowley's home, Trotty learns that the letter he had delivered was about Will Fern and the punishment to be given to him. On the way back, Trotty happens to meet Will Fern and his niece Lilian. Seeing their abject, pathetic condition he takes them to the comfort of his house, albeit that of a poor one.

Later that night while reading the newspaper accounts of the depraved life and actions of the 'have nots' – the vagrants, petty thieves and street dwellers, he realises the midnight chimes to be ringing uncommonly loud. They seemed to be calling out to him. Curiosity takes him to the Church tower which to his surprise was unlocked. Accidentally he gets locked in the Church tower and makes his way to the belfry where to his astonishment and wonder, he finds himself surrounded by mysterious creatures of all shapes and sizes. As Trotty gazes around him, the chimes stopped suddenly and all the creatures collapsed. The Goblin of the Great Bell appears and informs Trotty that he has been dead for the past nine years. Meanwhile, Will Fern's niece Lilian materialises out of nowhere and becomes his guide to present a future in accordance to the "doctrine" held by the three Gentlemen. Thus begins Trotty's fantastic journey into the Future Time.

The future vignettes show Meg as an older and unmarried woman. The misery of life has taken toll of her youth and beauty. She is seen living with

Lilian – a life without cheer and hope. In the next scene Trotty is shifted to Bowley Hall where Lady Bowley's birthday celebration is going on. The three gentlemen (Alderman Cute, Mr. Filler, Sir Joseph Bowley) are present along with a red-faced gentleman. At this juncture, Will Fern makes his entry to interrogate these respectable and judicious men of their idea of justice because of whom he has spent a life time in prison. The scene changes again to show Meg alone and busy in the drudgery of work, when she is visited by Richard. He informs her about Lilian who (owing to the dire circumstances of her life) has taken to prostitution and wanted to help her with the money. But Meg turns down Lilian's offer. At midnight a sickly, emaciated Lilian comes home and dies in the arms of Meg.

In the next vignette (more years have passed), Trotty is introduced to a scene in the house of Mrs. Chickenstalker's, now married to Mr. Tugby (the porter of Sir Bowley) after Mr. Chickenstalker's death. Mr. and Mrs. Tugby are visited by a medical attendant who has come to take away the sick and good for nothing Richard (living in their house) to the workhouse. The conversation of Mr. and Mrs. Tugby, informs the reader of the misfortunes and troubles that had befallen Richard ever since the New Year's Eve – a long time back. The vignette depicts the consequences of the "deadly doctrine" (that poor should not marry) pronounced by the three Gentlemen that New Year's Eve. Eversince then, the life of Meg and Richard had changed for the worst. The love and trust between them was lost. Poor and unemployed, Richard took to a

life of drinking and idleness. He eventually turns to Meg for help who marries him with the hope of saving him. But it is too late. She tries to nurse him back to health but fails. Burdened with a grievously ill husband, a small baby and poverty, Meg finds herself totally helpless. At this point Mr. and Mrs. Tugby's narration is interrupted to announce the death of Richard.

Meg with her baby is next shown languishing in a state of "dire and pining want". For any wretched amount, she labours day and night for the sake of her baby. Thrown out of the house by Mr. Tugby, dogged by misery and misfortune, Meg decides to end her life by jumping into the river along with the baby. She could not bear to think of her child, suffer the fate of Lilian. As she moves towards the river, Trotty cries out to the Bells in despair to have mercy and save her. He has learned his lesson. The next moment, he finds Meg in his arms and cries out that he had seen the Spirit of the Chimes. Before he could say more, the chimes begin to ring again to announce the arrival of the New Year.

Back to the present and real times, he sees Meg preparing her wedding gown. Her happy, blooming, youthful self is looking forward to a future full of promises. It was the New Year as well as Richard and Meg's wedding day. Fern, Lilian, and Mrs. Chickenstalker join in the merriment and the festive spirit of the day takes over. In this mood of celebration and festivity another stroke of good luck is added. Mrs. Chickenstalker turns out to be Lilian's

mother's friend whom Fern had been looking for. The story, thus ends on a happy note – of song, dance, and laughter.

The Chimes though not as popular as *Christmas Carol*, is technically more advanced in the working and presentation of the fantasy elements. The gothic details employed in *Christmas Carol* are present in this book as well, but the story is realised in a more realistic manner. The fairy tale elements, the interplay of the supernatural and the magical, appear after the reader is halfway through the book. Yet, Dickens has taken care to create the atmosphere for it, from the beginning of the narrative. The description of the wind reads thus:

> the night-wind has a dismal trick of wandering round and round a building of the sort, and moaning as it goes; and of trying, with its unseen hands, the windows and the doors; and seeking out some crevices by which to enter. And when it has got in . . . it wails and howls . . . gliding round and round the pillars . . . then flings . . . and creeps along the walls, seeming to read, in whispers, the Inscriptions sacred to Dead. At some of these, it breaks out shrilly, as with laughter; and at others, moans and cries as if it were lamenting. It has a ghostly sound too. (Dickens, *Books* 81)

The personification of the wind with its moaning, wailing, and howling, sets the mood for something unnatural to happen. The aural and visual impact of the atmosphere creates a sense of horror, mystery, and suspense which prepares the reader for their encounter with the supernatural in course of the narrative.

At the beginning of the story, Dickens treats the chimes as animate beings, thus, hinting at their supernatural powers that will come to light later:

> Centuries ago, these bells had been baptized by bishops: so many centuries ago, that the register of their baptism was lost long, long before the memory of man, and no one knew their names. They had had their Godfathers and Godmothers . . .
> . . . They had clear, loud, lusty, sounding voices. (Dickens, *Books* 82)

According to Harry Stone, in *The Chimes*, the writer with "compelling exactitude and wonderful fancifulness" has used a more imaginative and supernatural agency to guide the fairy-tale working of the story. Instead of ghosts "the vibrations of the bells slowly take on magical qualities and superintend what takes place" (126). As remarked earlier, Dickens has made use of both aural and visual effects to create the atmosphere of terror and mystery. On the last day of the year, Trotty feels the chimes to be ringing uncommonly loud and calling out to him. To satisfy his curiosity he reaches the Church-tower and accidentally locks himself in. Thus, begins the tale of his strange experience and bizarre events. The ghostly and haunting atmosphere of the Church-tower is intensified by the sense of loneliness and darkness of the night. It arouses a sense of fright and terror in him. He seemed so far away from help "the long, dark, winding ghost beleaguered way that lay between

him and the earth on which men lived". The author has employed the technique of magic realism to create the suspense and confusion:

> This was the belfry . . . He caught hold of one of the frayed ropes which hung down . . . At first he started. Thinking it was hair; then trembled at the very thought of waking the deep Bell . . .
>
> . . .
>
> Giddy, confused, and out of breath, and frightened, Toby looked about him vacantly, and sunk down in a swoon. (Dickens, *Books* 119)

Breaking his slumber are "mysterious and awful figures" (121). Awake and standing on his feet, he saw the solitary tower, thus peopled with myriad figures – a truly "Goblin Sight" (120). Dickens with masterly skill has developed these supernatural agencies – spirits, goblins, phantoms, and elves to create the most curious and fantastic setting. They swarm about him, filling the air and the habitations of men with restless and untiring motion:

> He saw the tower, whither his charmed footsteps had brought him, swarming with dwarf phantoms, spirit, elfin creatures of the Bell. He saw them leaping, flying, dropping, pouring from ground; above him, from the massive iron-girded beams; peeping in upon him, through the chinks and loopholes in the walls; spreading away and away from him in enlarging circles, as the water ripples give way to a huge stone that suddenly comes plashing in among them. He saw them, of all aspects and all shapes. He saw them ugly, handsome, crippled, exquisitely formed. He saw them young . . . old . . . kind . . . cruel, he saw them merry, he saw them grim; he saw them dance and heard them sing: he

> saw the tear their hair, and heard them howl. He saw the air thick with them. He saw them come and go, incessantly. (Dickens, *Books* 120)

And as he gazed, bewildered by these extraordinary figures, the chimes stopped suddenly and the "whole swarm fainted". It is then Trotty becomes aware "in every Bell a bearded figure of the bulk and the stature of the Bell . . . Gigantic, grave, and darkly watchful of him":

> Mysterious and awful figures! Resting on nothing; poised in the night air of the tower, with their draped and hooded heads merged in the dim roof; motionless and shadowy . . . each with its muffled hand upon its goblin mouth. (121-122)

Dickens with great artistic acumen has personified the goblins of the bells. Building upon the terror and loneliness of the place, of the wind and fearful night, he makes the Goblin of the Great bell speak to Trotty in its low and deep voice. It questions and interrogates him about "Time", striking terror into the old man's heart:

> 'Who puts into the mouth of Time, or its servants,' said the Goblin of the Bell, 'a cry of lamentation for days which have had their trail and their failure . . . who does this, does us wrong. And you have done that wrong . . .
>
> . . .
>
> 'Who hears in us, the Chimes, one note bespeaking disregards, or stern regards, of any hope, or joy, or pain, or sorrow, of the many-

> sorrowed throng . . . does us wrong. That wrong you have done us!' said the Bell.
>
> 'I have!' said Trotty. 'Oh forgive me!'
>
> 'Who hears us echo the dull vermin of the earth: the Putters Down of crushed and broken natures, formed to be raised up higher than such maggots of the time can crawl or can conceive,' . . . does us wrong . . .
>
> 'Lastly, and most of all,' pursued the Bell. 'Who turns his back upon the fallen and disfigured of his kind; abandons them as vile; and does not trace and track with pitying eyes the unfenced precipice by which they fell from good . . . does wrong to Heaven and man, to time and to eternity. (Dickens, *Books* 123-124)

Giving full reign to his imagination, Dickens has employed all elements of gothic literature – supernatural creatures and happenings, moaning and wailing sounds, a sudden silence, howling wind, lonely place, surprises, screams of terror to create the full impact of fantasy and magical moments. Added to these supernatural happenings is Trotty's swift time travel across space and time. In the bell-fry, Trotty is informed by the Goblin of the Bell that nine years have passed since he came to the tower and died:

> some hurried knowledge, how conveyed to him he knew not, that more years had passed; and Trotty . . . stood looking on at moral company. (138)

Employing the technique of time travel, Dickens makes it possible for Trotty to see the future vignettes of Meg, Richard, and his other companions. The genius

of Dickens as a writer is evident in the development of the vignettes, as he uses them as a narrative technique to telescope time and make a kaleidoscopic presentation of the life of the dramatis personae concerned.

Caught in bewildering surroundings and circumstances, a witness (through vignettes) to a future – malignant and life denying in its intensity, Trotty breaks out in hysteria. His cries, screams of terror and emotional speeches are overwhelmingly heart rending. In Bowley Hall, hearing the conversation of the upper class people, rouses highly wrought emotions in Trotty and make him utter these words:

> What, Alderman! No words of Putting Down? Remember, Justice, your high moral boast and pride. Come, Alderman! Balance those scales. . . . Weigh me the two, you Daniel, going to judgment, when your day shall come! Weigh them . . .
>
> The words rose up in Trotty's breast, as if they had been spoken by some other voice within him. (Dickens, *Books* 129-130)

While pleading to save Meg from committing suicide, Trotty cries out in anguish:

> 'I have learnt it!' cried the old man. 'O, have mercy on me . . . Pity my presumption, wickedness, and ignorance, and save her.'
>
> . . .
>
> 'Have mercy on her!'. . . . There is no loving mother on the earth who might not come to this, if such a life had gone before. (151)

These emotionally charged scenes, melodramatic in intent and suffused with gothic elements, allow Dickens to masterfully blend realism, psychology, and fantasy to bring forth his motif of awakening social consciousness and changing the society for better.

The Chimes is a socio-political satire with a plea for human charity. It shows the wrong done to the poor and downtrodden people like Trotty, Meg, Richard, Will Fern, Lilian, and others by the bourgeoisie society of Victorian England. Dickens satirically attacks the inhuman, injust, and corrupt social, political, and judicial system of his times with the help of characters like Alderman Cute, Mr. Filer, and Sir Joseph Bowley, and a red-faced gentleman. The episode of Will Fern, brings to life the prejudices and injustices: humiliation and insults which stifled the very life and existence of the poor by the might of the rich and powerful:

> 'Now, gentlemen,' said Will Fern, holding out his hands, and flushing for an instant in his haggard face, 'see how your laws are made to trap and hunt us when we're brought to this. I tries to live elsewhere. And I'm a vagabond. . . . To Jail with him! At last, the constable, the keeper–anybody–finds me anywhere, a-doing anything. To jail with him, for he's a vagrant, and a jail-bird known; and jail's the only home he's got.' (Dickens, *Books* 132-133)

The future vignettes concerning Will Fern and Lilian, is a stinging attack on the corrupt judicial system and the harsh laws of Victorian England which are shown to be responsible for the increased crime rate. Being poor and helpless, they are forced (by such a system) to lead a life of vagabonds, and take to a life of crime and antisocial activities. The miserable living conditions in the city, Lilian's moral ruin, her turning to prostitution, are presented by Dickens as major problems faced by the poor of his time. Instead of getting sympathy and help for such hardships and misery, they were held responsible for their sufferings and to be punished by lawpersons like Sir Alderman Cute. Fern's cry is the cry of the common Victorian man, who suffered the most in the course of industrial growth and development and for the unequal and discriminatory laws of the society:

> 'see how your laws are made to trap and haunt us when we are brought to this. I tries to live elsewhere. And I'm a vagabond . . .'
>
> . . .
>
> . . . 'Who can give me back my liberty . . . my good name . . . my innocent niece? Not all the Lords and Ladies in the wide England. Give us, in mercy, better homes when we're a-lying in our cradles; give us better food when we're a-working for our lives; give us kinder laws to bring us back when we 're a-going wrong; and don't set jail, jail, jail, afore us , everywhere we turn . . .' (Dickens, *Books* 132-133)

The hypocrisy and pretentious behaviour of such a system is brought to light through the opinion of the Alderman on the subject of suicide. His sense of

justice is determined by the socio-economic status of the individual. He accuses the poor for committing suicide. He says to Meg and Richard that "I'll have no pity for you, for I have made up my mind to Put all suicide Down" (Dickens, *Books* 99). And when Deedle, the banker (holding a high position in Goldsmith's Company) shoots himself, the same Alderman blames the conditions and not the person:

> 'Circumstances!' exclaimed the Alderman. 'A man of noble fortunes . . .'
>
> . . .
>
> . . . One of the most respectable men I ever knew! A lamentable instance, Mr. Fish. A public calamity! I shall make a point of wearing the deepest mourning. A most respectable man! But there is One above. We must submit, Mr. Fish. We must submit! (129)

Sir Joseph Bowley, representing the political system of the Victorian times, too, comes in for severe criticism. By claming to be the poor man's friend, his ulterior motive to gain support and political power for himself is highlighted. His only interest is to be part of the power politics of his day. Lady Bowley's statement "They only allow two votes for a subscription of five pounds. Really monstrous!" (105) is a satire on the materialistic tendency of the political machinery. It was a system favouring the capitalist-bourgeoisie. The country was governed by a strong monarchy, which advocated the right of

inheritance to that of capability/talent/skill. Sir Alderman Cute speaks of Sir Bowley's twelve year old son thus:

> We shall have this little gentleman in the Parliament now . . . 'before we know where we are. We shall hear of his successes at the poll . . . we shall make our little oration about him in the Common Council . . .' (Dickens, *Books* 128)

Through the working of the fantasy elements, by creating an alternate world of reality, Dickens wants to drive home a lesson by asking what would become of the future, if a society (as described) remained unchanged? Through the character of Trotty (representative of working class), Dickens attacks the inhuman industrial system – a system synonymous with exploitation and oppression; where poor workers worked for long hours and for which they were paid poorly:

> The Alderman cut him short by giving him the letter from his pocket. Toby would have got a shilling too; but Mr. Filer clearly showing that in that case he would rob a certain given number of persons of ninepence-half penny a-piece, he got sixpence; and thought himself very well off to get that. (100)

Trotty's dinner – treat, presented to him by Meg and Richard to celebrate their forthcoming marriage is a reference to 'Hungry Forties' (1830s and 1840s, a period of enormous food shortage in England). Trotty is too excited to have

tripe, a potato, and half a pint of fresh drawn beer for his dinner and when he learns that Meg has already eaten her dinner, he exclaims in surprise:

> 'Two dinners in one day! It an't possible! You might as well tell me that two New Year's Day will come together, or that I have had a gold head all my life, and never changed it.' (Dickens, *Books* 91)

Moreover, the same dinner, invites snide and derisive comments of the rich to act as an exposé of their mean, malicious mindset. They make fun of Trotty and accuse him for having such a meal which should not be his want keeping in mind his poor circumstances. Mr. Filler elaborates:

> 'Tripe is without exception the least economical, and the most wasteful article of consumption, . . . the waste on that amount of tripe, if boiled, would victual a garrison of five hundred men for five months of thirty-one days each, and a February over. The Waste, the Waste!'
> . . .
> You snatch your tripe, my friend, out of the mouths of widows and orphans. (94-95)

The inhuman and callous attitude of higher class people towards the have-nots of the society is a reflection on nineteenth century as a time that favoured men with money and power. Poor were blamed for all the evils and ills of the society. The newspaper reports that Trotty reads and exclaims aloud, is a sad and ironic commentary on the prevailing conditions:

> 'Why! Lord!' said Toby. 'The Paper is full of observation. . . . I don't know what we poor people are coming to . . .'
>
> . . .
>
> 'It seems as if we can't go right, or do right, or be righted. . . . I can't make out whether we have any business on the face of the earth, or not. . . . there is any good at all in us, or whether we are born bad. We seem to be dreadful things . . . give a deal of trouble . . . always being complained of and guarded against. One way or other, we fill the paper . . . (Dickens, *Books* 87)

Dickens as a writer holds a mirror to the bourgeoisie/capitalist society, in order to make it realise that it is responsible for the miserable plight of the workers which forced them to take to a life of crime. He denounces the hypocritical and pretentious behaviour of the Victorian upper class through the four gentlemen Trotty met. The vignettes of the Future, emotionally raw in content, are a serious and severe indictment of the society (bourgeoisie) for being responsible for destroying the future of young people like Meg, Richard, and Lilian. Richard's destruction and death symbolises the death of youth, ill used and misled by the society:

> A slouching, moody, drunken sloven, wasted by intemperance and vice, and with his matted hair and unshorn beard in wild disorder; but with some traces on him, too, of having been a man of good proportion and good features in his youth. (134)

Meg's child "so wan, so prematurely old, so dreadful in its gravity, so plaintive in its feeble, mournful, miserable wail" (Dickens, *Books* 145) represents the future:

> In her own scanty shawl, she wrapped the baby warm. With her fevered hands she smoothed its limbs, composed its face, arranged its mean attire. In her wasted arms she folded it, as though she never would resign it more. And with her dry lips, kissed it in a final pang, and last long agony of Love. (150)

Dickens has tried to convey that the future of such a society that advocates such gratuitous perishings will itself meet with a similar blighted, decadent end.

Drawing on the technique of antithesis, the novelist contrasts the selfish and mean attitude of the rich with Trotty's sense of warm hospitality. Realising the grave and pathetic condition of Will Fern and little Lillian, he invited them to his house, "The New Year never can be happy to me, if I see the child and you go wandering away, you don't know where . . . I'm a poor man, living in a place; but I can give you lodging" (113). At his poor dwelling, he and Meg comforted them. Without making them realise that they did not have any thing to eat, he buys half an ounce of tea and bacon with the six pence he had earned that day. Trotty's generosity is a lesson for the cold, hard-hearted, materialistic

society of the nineteenth century. Dickens uses the Goblin of the Great Bell as the didactic agency to make people realise what is best for them:

> 'The voice of Time', said the Phantom, 'cries to man, Advance! Time is for his advancement and improvement . . . his progress onwards . . . Ages of darkness, wickedness, and violence, have come and gone . . . Who seeks to turn him back, or stay him on his course, arrest a mighty engine which will strike the meddler dead; and be the fiercer and the wilder, ever, for its momentary check!' (Dickens, *Books* 123)

Goblin's voice is the voice of time. It creates a magical effect and makes the reader think about himself and his society.

Through the vignettes shown to Trotty, Dickens bitterly attacks the corrupt systems of his age. He uses fantasy as a medium to highlight the common social problems of the times: poverty, ignorance, increasing crime rate, violence, drinking, prostitution, unemployment – for which the poor were always accused. But it was the society which needed to reform, for it was responsible for creating conditions which left the poor no choice but to tread the path of vice. Dickens "felt that at Christmas season men's heart were softened and receptive. At that time . . . he could steal into their hearts and move them to change" (Stone 129). Dickens has masterfully accomplished this task by holding a mirror to his society to make them realise their mistake and change for the better.

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The Cricket on the Hearth: A Fairy Tale of Home

The Cricket on the Hearth: A Fairy Tale of Home is third in the series of the Christmas Books. It appeared on 20th December, 1845. This book is a celebration of home life – domestic joys and love. Dickens only hints upon some contemporary conditions in it, but does not deride or attack any institution of his times.

It is a simple story of a carrier, John Perrybingle and his wife Mary whom he lovingly calls Dot. Though, John is much older to his wife, the couple is introduced as leading a happy contended life with their small baby. One day while returning home from his work, John is met by an old, deaf stranger whom he brings home in order to give him shelter for the night. That same evening, the couple is visited by Caleb Plummer, the toy-maker and later by Tackleton, the toy-merchant. Tackleton has come to inform them of his forthcoming marriage to May Fielding (Dot's friend) three days later, as well as to invite them to a party the next evening, and spend time with his would be wife and her mother. Caleb, the toy-maker is introduced as a doting father who lives in a little cracked nutshell of a wooden house with his blind daughter Bertha. With tender care he has filled her dark world with the vibrant colours of life. The harsh reality of their ignominious existence need not ever be known to her. With the magic of words, he has painted for her unseeing eyes a dream house blessed with domestic joy and bliss. The blind girl is in love with

the ill natured Tackleton: whom she considers as their benefactor – benevolent, tender, honest man, who gave them work and a beautiful house to live in. However, she is heart broken when she learns of his forthcoming marriage.

The night when all were enjoying at the party, Tackleton shatters the happiness of John by showing Dot (his wife) with the 'stranger' in a room: the old, deaf stranger was but a young handsome man in disguise. The discovery shatters John's happiness as he feels betrayed. After returning home and unable to sleep, he contemplates killing the stranger. But as the evil thought begins to grow and overpower his goodness, the cricket on the hearth takes the shape of a fairy to guide him towards what was right and good/truthful. The fairy shows him visions of Dot as a caring, faithful wife and thus prevents John from committing a crime. Next day, after John leaves for his work, Caleb and Bertha arrive to console Dot, as they have come to know of the blame against her. While they are talking a young man enters the house whom Caleb recognises to be his son Edward who had gone to South England to become a sailor and was thought to be dead. Edward informs them that it was he who had come as the disguised stranger; that he had married May as they loved each other and that Dot had been helping them. The whole truth is then revealed to Tackleton and John. John realises his mistake and makes amends to his wife – they are a happy family again. In the evening everyone celebrates the wedding party of Edward and May. It was a happy time for everyone.

Unlike his other Christmas stories, in this book, Dickens has not employed the gothic elements to produce the fantasy world. But as in *The Chimes*, the fairy note is introduced right at the beginning of the story. The simple realistic chores and details of domestic life have been enlivened by the personification of the kettle and the clock. These minute narrative details prepare the reader to anticipate happenings and occurrences beyond the ken of reality:

> the kettle was aggravating and obstinate. It wouldn't allow itself to be adjusted on the top bar . . . it would lean forward with a drunken air, and dribble . . . It was quarrelsome, and hissed and spluttered at the fire . . .
>
> . . .
>
> . . . the little Haymaker at the top of the Dutch clock . . . stood still before the Moorish Palace . . .
>
> . . . .But his sufferings, when the clock was going to strike, were frightful to behold; and when a Cuckoo looked out of the trap-door in the Palace, and gave note six times, it shook him, each time like a spectral voice – or like something wiry, plucking at his legs.
>
> . . .
>
> . . . the kettle, growing mellow and musical, began to have irrepressible gurglings in its throat, and to indulge in short vocal snorts, . . . burst into a stream of song so cosy and hilarious. (Dickens, *Books* 160-161)

The musical sounds produced by the cricket's chirping and kettle's humming fills Perrybingle's cottage with all attributes of a happy home life:

> the Cricket took first fiddle and kept it . . . Its shrill, sharp, piercing voice resounded through the house, and seemed to twinkle in the outer darkness like a star. (Dickens, *Books* 162)

According to English belief, cricket on the hearth is a symbol of domestic joys and bliss. Dickens' knowledge of folklore and mythical beliefs has made him use the cricket as synonymous with home life. It responds to the mood of the house. When the atmosphere is filled with the joys of love and togetherness, its voice trills sharply throughout the house, but the mood of despondency and sadness in the household (a result of the misunderstanding between John and Dot) makes it silent, "the manner and the music were quite changed. The Cricket, too, had stopped. Somehow the room was not so cheerful as it had been" (169).

Once again, as in other Christmas Books the atmosphere corresponds to the confused and disturbed state of mind of John, the protagonist:

> the carrier sat brooding on his hearth, now cold and dark, other and fiercer thoughts began to rise within him . . .
> . . . the moon was dim, and hear wild noises in the stormy weather. (208)

As he sits through the night contemplating murder of the stranger, the cricket takes on the shape of a fairy (the only supernatural agent Dickens employes in the novella) to appear before him and attempts to set things right:

> suddenly, the struggling fire illuminated the whole chimney with a glow of light; and the Cricket on the Hearth began to Chirp!
>
> . . . .
>
> The Cricket on the Hearth came out into the room, and stood in Fairy shape before him. (Dickens, *Books* 210)

With the help of its magical and beneficent powers, the fairy (Cricket) shows John the visions of joyous family life which he owed to Dot as a faithful, sincere, and devoted wife. This helps him to realise the truth and clear away the cobwebs from his mind and once again his life is set a glow with happiness "the moon burst out, and shone brightly in the sky" (212).

The ending of the novella reminds one of Charles lamb's essay *Dream Children: A Reverie.* It appears to be a waking dream, a product of the writers emotional intensity and imaginative felicity:

> But what is this! Even as I listen to them, blithely, and turn towards Dot . . . she and rest have vanished into the air , I am left alone. A Cricket sings upon the Hearth; a broken child's-toy lies upon the ground; and nothing else remains. (234)

Though, *The Cricket on the Hearth* is a celebration of domestic life, it does hint at some contemporary conditions of Victorian England. By 1830 North England had become increasingly industrialised while trade and commerce was done from the south. London was the centre of commerce. Dickens makes use of these facts through the incident of Edward (Caleb's son) who had migrated to South England to become a sailor. Tackleton, the toy-merchant's attitude towards his employee Caleb, is reflective of the callous, selfish, inhuman attitude of the industrialists towards their workers. There is an indirect reflection on the corrective measures and initiatives taken by the government towards public welfare e.g. health schemes and vaccination programmes to control epidemics, infant mortality rate due to industrial growth and pollution. This fact is brought to light through Mrs. Perrybingle's appreciation of her child:

> "Two months and three da-ays! Vaccinated just six weeks ago-o! Took very fine-ly! Considered by the doctor, a remarkably beautiful chi-ild!" (Dickens, *Books* 171)

Unlike his other Christmas stories, Dickens in this book has taken a different direction to express his authorial purpose. Instead of aiming at social teaching, raising social consciousness and thereby bringing social reformation, his main emphasis is on the domestic virtues of love and trust that give rise to simple domestic joys. Dickens regarded home as the only place which

provided refuge and comfort to man, after a day's hard work. The simple joys and pleasures of home life, sheltered and consoled him from the harsh and cruel realities of life/work. John Perribingle's hearth is symbolic of this bliss.

Dickens next Christmas Book *The Battle of Life: A Love Story* appeared in December of 1846. As it does not involve any fantastic element and deals with no social issue, it has not been taken up for analysis.

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CHAPTER 1

(II)

THE HAUNTED MAN AND THE GHOST'S BARGAIN: A FANCY FOR CHRISTMAS-TIME

The last book of the Christmas series is *The Haunted Man and The Ghost's Bargain: A Fancy for Christmas-Time* published on 19th December, 1848. Dickens wrote this novella while undergoing great emotional stress. In the summer of 1848, he had watched his sister Fanny, dying wretchedly of consumption. As he painfully observed her wasting and emaciated body and grieved over her early decay, his mind kept wandering back to their childhood days. Fanny died on 2nd September and about a month later Dickens sat down to finish *The Haunted Man.* The book is a dirge to memory. It expresses and explores the deep dissatisfaction: misery, distress, sorrow, heartbreak, tribulation, wretchedness that had been roused and intensified by his sister's untimely death.

Written in the mode of fantasy, it revives the *Carol's* magic, yet there is a marked difference in the emphasis and technique of the two books. Dickens in *The Haunted Man*:

> returns to some of the main figures of the *Carol* – the solitary central character . . . the poor family sustained by mutual love and the terrible

> apparitions Ignorance and Want here made flesh in the . . . savage street-child. From them Dickens evolves a story about the inter-relationship between memory, especially the memory of wrongs and sorrows, the moral life, social responsibility and the survival of human feelings among the poor that, in some ways, probes these issues more deeply and painfully than does the *Carol*. (Dickens xxii)

The 'haunted man' of the story is Redlaw, a learned professor of Chemistry. The epithet 'haunted man' has been cleverly employed by Dickens, in order to indicate, not only his physical appearance but as well as to capture his emotional and psychological state. The story begins at a point which is marked by overwhelming features of gothic eeriness and gloominess.

One evening while seated by the fireside in his (Redlaw) room, his servant William Swidger enters with the dinner. William's wife Milly, and his father Old Philip, keeper and custodian of Redlaw's foundation also arrives with the "Holly leaves". It was Christmas time. However, Philip's greeting of "Merry Christmas" goes unanswered, as Redlaw is lost in his gloomy thoughts. Both William and Milly inform Redlaw about a sick student who has not gone home for Christmas vacations due to his poor condition. However, Milly does not allow the Chemist to meet the student, as the young man desired not to be known to Redlaw. William, further informs him about a young homeless child, whom Milly has brought home as he was found shivering at the door-step. As Redlaw makes no effort to speak, they leave him alone. The room turns darker and the shadow behind Redlaw's chair deepens and takes his shape.

The spectra being Redlaw's 'other self', dwells into his unhappy past and brings out a tale of betrayal and distrust. He is the neglected child of a mother, who had married another man after his father's death: his most trusted friend, Longford, had betrayed his sister and then eloped with his fiancée. Unable to cope with the tragedy of her life, his sister had died at a young age, desolate and heartbroken. These bitter memories make Redlaw yearn to forget his past and the phantom grants him the gift of forgetfulness: to forget what disturbs him but to retain his learning. However, this gift to forget would get automatically transmitted to all those whom he met. As the spectra disappears, Redlaw is left standing confused and lost. He is disturbed by a cry from the adjoining room. He discovers it to be of the child whom Milly has brought with her: he was like a young beast in his wretched condition with tatters for clothes and naked feet covered with blood and dust. He had no name and wanted to go to Milly. The Chemist shows him the way.

The sick student (mentioned earlier) lodges at Tetterby's home. Dolphus Tetterby runs a shop in Jerusalem Building, but is unsuccessful in his venture. He has a family of eight children and his ten year old son, Master Adolphus, is made to work to support the family. Mrs. Sophia Tetterby is unhappy and depressed as there is not enough money to buy proper food for her family. Dolphus helps to console her and makes her realise to be grateful to each other for their love, sacrifices and support. At this juncture, the arrival of Redlaw to inquire about the sick student, brings about an unpleasant change in them. As

promised by the Phantom, the ill effect of the gift begins to be perceptible. Passing their hand across their forehead they turn pale; the love and affection between them seems to evaporate.

As the narrative continues the student turns out to be Longford's son who is ashamed of his father and mother's perfidy. His parents' marriage borne out of betrayal had not been a happy one and he seeks forgiveness for his parents' act. On Redlaw's arrival, he too feels some unspeakable change within himself. He refuses Redlaw's help. His manners alter for the worst. Redlaw realises the phantom's gift to be a curse. The sequence of unhappy and querulous events make him yearn to find his old self back. Suddenly he realises that of all those he had met since the Phantom's disappearance, only the child had shown no signs of change. He rushes back to the child to resolve the problem.

The child takes Redlaw to the slums, where he is met by a prostitute who refuses to take help from him. His visit to the room of Old Philip's eldest son, George in the slum is attended by similar negative happenings. George who lay sick because of his habit of gambling and drinking was confessing to his mistakes and asking for forgiveness of his father. Also present in the house were Philip and William in the company of a destitute and hungry man who wanted to kill himself. But Redlaw's presence changed everything. The pleasant atmosphere of love, forgiveness, sharing and compassion dissolves and is replaced with bitterness and acrimony. Disturbed by the transformation.

Redlaw runs back with the child to his room and locks himself in. He refuses to open the door even to Milly's knocking. She informs him that the 'hungry man' was his friend Longford from the past. However, Redlaw is unable to recall anything and in desperation calls out to the Phantom to come and take back its gift. But his cry is to no avail.

Resigned to his fate, Redlaw is seen sitting still in his chair and the child lying asleep before the fireplace, when suddenly Christmas music begins to play. The effect of the music is such, that Redlaw's eyes were with tears and as the last chord dies away the Phantom appears. Its shadowy hand is holding the hand of Milly's shadow and informs Redlaw to seek her (she had the capability) to set everything right. The Phantom explains that the child since his birth had experienced nothing but pain, hardships and denials in his life: he had no happy memories so he had nothing to lose. He was the perfect embodiment of what Redlaw wanted to be – a man without any feelings and emotions. The words of the Phantom lift Redlaw from the abyss of despair. Gone was his revulsion for the child. He is a redeemed man who has learnt his mistake. Soon the darkness fades away giving place to the brilliance of the rising sun. Redlaw (with Milly's help) has learnt to imbibe the Christmas spirit of love, mercy and kindness and thus has achieved his redemption/salvation.

At the Tetterby's home where everyone was in a bad temper, regain their charm and good temper on Milly's arrival. The sick student too is restored to good humour and feels ashamed for his earlier outbrust. Milly informs him

about his beloved's arrival. Redlaw joins them all and realises that through Milly his evil has been mitigated. They return back to the lodge where old Philip and William's distress and despondency is done away by Milly's arrival. She introduces Redlaw to Longford but he is unable to recollect the wrong done to him. Following Milly's advice he forgives Longford who then goes away. Redlaw unable to recall anything drops down in his chair. William and Old Philip, praise Milly for her affection, care and concern. George, too, is comforted and solaced by Miily, William, and Old Philip and finds himself at peace. Milly's act of pure love helps to restore Redlaw's memory. Changed for the better, he thanks her and invites everyone for Christmas dinner where everyone was to be present – all the Swidgers, Tetterbys, the young couple, the boy. It was Christmas time and the Spirit of Christmas showered its benediction on them all.

In many aspects, this book is similar to *The Christmas Carol.* Dickens has employed the same format: a lonely protagonist, magical happenings, changing situations, and a happy ending. As in the other Christmas Books, in *The Haunted Man*, too, Dickens has relied upon gothic elements to create the fantasy effect. The haunting atmosphere is build from the very onset of the story. Redlaw – the haunted man is introduced to the reader thus:

> his hallow check; his sunken brilliant eyes; his black-attired figure, indefinably grim . . . his grizzled hair hanging, like tangled sea-weed, about his face . . . looked like a haunted man?
> . . . his manner, taciturn, thoughtful, gloomy, shadowed by habitual reserve, retiring always and jocund never . . . was the manner of a haunted man?
> . . . his voice, slow-speaking, deep, and grave . . . was the voice of a haunted man? (Dickens 125)

Having set the narrative tone, the writer prepares the reader to encounter strange, uncanny and bizarre happenings in course of the novella. Redlaw's home has a haunting atmosphere of its own, comparable with the castles of the 'terror school' or gothic novels:

> solitary and vault-like, - an old, retired part of an ancient endowment for students . . .
> . . . always thundering with echoes when a distant voice was raised or a door was shut, – echoes, not confined to the many low passages and empty rooms, but rumbling and grumbling till they were stifled in the heavy air. (126-127)

This dark, cold and gloomy atmosphere enhances the horror element in the book and allows strange things to happen. Amidst the howling of the wind and darkness of the night, the forms of things appear:

> indistinct and big, but not wholly lost. When sitters by the fire began to see wild faces and figures, mountains and abysses, ambuscades, and armies, in the coals . . .
>
> When travellers by land were bitter cold, and looked wearily on gloomy landscapes, rustling and shuddering in the blast. (Dickens 127)

The skilful blending of the realistic with the supernatural, intensifies the haunting atmosphere of Redlaw's room. The mood, tone and setting all seem to have become infected with an expectancy for the strange, unusual and the unexpected. There is a gradual build up of suspense and fear that paves way for the appearance of the supernatural. Finally, when the Phantom appears, it is a culmination in fact, a confirmation of the reader's imaginative expectancy – a willing suspension of disbelief. One important device often used by Dickens in the creation of a haunting and eerie atmosphere is of personification. Beginning with the description of the 'shadows', he writes:

> When twilight everywhere released the shadows, prisoned up all day, that now closed in and gathering like mustering swarms of ghosts. When they stood lowering, in the corners of the rooms, and frowned out from behind half-open doors. . . . When they danced upon the floors, and walls, and ceilings, . . . mocked the shapes of household objects, making the nurse an ogress, the rocking-horse a monster, the wondering child, half-scared and half-amused, a stranger to itself,– the very tongs upon the hearth, a straddling giant with his arms a-kimbo, evidently smelling the blood of Englishmen, and wanting to grind people's bones to make his bread. (128)

The suspense and horror of the scene is further heightened with the personification of wind and other objects:

> When the wind was rumbling in the chimney, and sometimes crooning, sometimes howling, in the house. When the old trees outside were so shaken and beaten . . . When, at intervals, the windows trembled, the rusty vane upon the turret-top complained, the clock beneath it recorded that another quarter of an hour was gone, or the fire collapsed and fell in with a rattle. (Dickens 130)

Finally, the sepulchral darkness and coldness of Redlaw's room, becomes a befitting background for the appearance of the Phantom:

> the healthy holly withered on the wall, and dropped–dead branches.
>
> As the gloom and shadow thickened behind him . . . it took, by slow degrees,–out of it there came, by some unreal, unsubstantial process, not to be traced by any human sense,–an awful likeness of himself!
>
> Ghastly and cold, colourless in its leaden face and hands . . . it came into its terrible appearance of existence, motionless, without a sound. (142)

The author's reliance on visual effect of darkness and cold, withered holly leaves, personification of various objects, blended with aural effects of echoes, rumbling, crooning, and howling wind, trembling windows add to the supernatural aspect. However, the main fantasy element in this book is the

'gift' given to Redlaw by the Phantom. Dickens has used the ironic mode to detail the working of the gift. Instead of being a blessing it turns out to be a 'curse' for Redlaw. The effect of the curse makes him cry with terror:

> "Give me back *myself*!" exclaimed Redlaw like a madman. "I am infected! I am infectious! I am charged with poison for my own mind, and the minds of all mankind . . . I am turning into stone . . ." (Dickens 182)

He begs and pleads of the Phantom to appear again and take back his gift:

> "Phantoms! Punishers of impious thoughts!" . . .
>
> . . .
>
> "Shadow of myself! Spirits of my darker hours!" cried Redlaw, in distraction. "Come back, and haunt me day and night, but take this gift away! . . ." (199)

The novelist has used the curse in order to highlight the importance of memory, to keep alive the virtues of mercy and compassion. When finally Redlaw's memory is restored he falls upon his knees crying out in relief, gratitude and joy. His high overwrought feelings and emotions that make him cry out in despair and horror are employed by Dickens as a characteristic of gothic writing which makes use of excessive and heightened sentiments to add to the fantastic mode.

As in *The Christmas Carol* in this novella too, the outer atmosphere, the interplay of light and dark is reflective of Redlaw's state of mind. The darkness in his room signifies his gloomy thoughts. As he broods upon the memories of his unhappy past and the wrongs done to him, the darkness around him thickens:

> The room had darkened more and more. There was a very heavy gloom and shadow gathering behind the Chemist's chair.
> . . .
> . . . "There's a chill and dismal feeling in the room". (Dickens 140-141)

Bright sunshine reflects Redlaw's reclaimed emotions as he comes out of his personal grief to feel for others:

> the distant line on the horizon brightened, the darkness faded, the sun rose red and glorious, and the chimney stacks and gables of the ancient building gleamed in the clear air, which turned the smoke and vapour of the city into a cloud of gold. (205)

In *The Haunted Man* there is no travel through space and time, no visions shown, instead Dickens has used the apparition of the protagonist, portentous repetitions, incantations, recurrences, and leitmotifs as additional fantasy devices to enhance the tale's atmosphere of enchantment and to grant organic unity to the work. The use of leitmotif – acts as a marker to signify the

importance of the frequently repeated word/phrase. In *The Haunted Man*, the Phantom's words – "the gift that I have given, you shall give again, go where you will" are repeated throughout the story:

> The repetition of the curse becomes . . . a magical refrain that gathers suspense until its climax and reversal when the curse-refrain is replaced by its opposite, a refrain that has been developed contrapuntally throughout the story: "Lord keep my memory green." (Stone 135-136)

The leitmotifs represent the central idea of the novella – the importance of memory to keep alive the virtues of mercy and compassion in the harsh Victorian world.

Similarly, Dickens has made use of repetitive signs and gestures that appear ritualistic in effect or becharmed. Each time the curse is transmitted, the recipient signifies its realisation by "the wandering hand upon the forehead." Incantations are believed to have magical effect when spoken or sung. In this book the 'Christmas music' has the virtue of incantation. Redlaw's change of feeling (goodwill and kindness) for others is the result of Christmas music:

> the Christmas music . . . began to play. He listened to it . . . As he did this, his face became less fixed and wondering; a gentle trembling came upon him; and at last his eyes filled with tears . . .
> . . . some dumb stir within him made him capable again, of being moved by what was hidden. (Dickens 201-202)

Later Milly's words have a magical effect on Redlaw and have a restorative effect on his memory. Milly's presence/role in the book is that of a guardian angle, to nurse and guide people to the path of righteousness and goodness:

> when my [Milly] little child was born and dead but a few days, and I was weak and sorrowful, and could not help grieving a little, the thought arose, that if I tried to lead a good life, I should meet in Heaven a bright creature, who would call me, Mother!"
>
> Redlaw fell upon his knees, with a loud cry.
>
> "O Thou," he said, "who, through the teaching of pure love, has graciously restored me to my memory . . ." (Dickens 227)

Dickens has kept the story open ended. The heart warming picture of the ending so stirs the expectancy and belief of the readers that they want it to be for real than a product of the unconscious mind. Though he effects the experience of Redlaw as being a 'dream', no where has he explicitly specified it to be a dream. The blending of the real with the unreal (dream) is so subtly and artistically managed that the readers are left in a state of confusion as to the exact nature of the tale. He forces them to think – whether what they read is possible or not. This technique has helped to maintain the extraordinariness of fantasy. In the working of fantasy, *The Haunted Man* has surpassed Dickens' other Christmas Books. He writes:

> Some people have said since, that he only thought what has been herein set down; others, that he read it in the fire . . . others, that the Ghost was but the representation of his gloomy thoughts, and Milly the embodiment of his better wisdom. *I say* nothing. (Dickens 228)

Furthermore, Dickens has made use of graphic allusions that are an aid to the understanding and appreciation of the book. "The pictorial frontispiece and the pictorial title page that stand opposite one another" to introduce the volume have been described by Harrry Stone thus:

> The frontispiece features Redlaw's ghostly alter ego whispering in his ears while devils, demons, and goblins contend with radiant angels. The title page depicts a bright angel and a dark, hooded phantom leading a child in different directions. (133)

The woodcut illustrations on the first page depict the scenes from *The Arabian Nights, The Tales of the Genii, and Cinderella.* All these graphic representations help to reinforce the storybook suggestions as well as contribute to the effect of fantasy.

Through *The Haunted Man,* Dickens brings to light the effects of the industrial revolution not only in the socio-economic sphere but also in the moral, spiritual, and religious life of the people of the Victorian era. Redlaw epitomoses the lonely, unhappy, alienated Victorian man, who (like him) was a victim of conditions created by the fast growing and changing industrial world and wanted to get rid of his sorrows and misfortunes. Dickens,

highlights the importance of such experiences through the protagonist's need for forgetfulness. In an attempt to find relief/freedom from his painful memories, Redlaw loses all he has. Before the gift is bestowed on him, he is a man who is suffering but human in behaviour. But the gift acts conversely and becomes a curse for him, reducing him (and the people infected by him) into a dehumanised husk – bereft of human feelings of love, affection, sympathy, and compassion. The effect of the gift on Redlaw and through him on others, shows him in a state of self-destructive mode. This condition of alienation reduces his existence into nothingness. The entire sequence of events since the time of the grant of the wish to the moment of Redlaw's realisation of its negative potency is suffused with symbolic overtones. It is an attack on the materialistic, self-centered, and selfish Victorian society, which in its pursuit of industrial, mechanical, and material advancement was bartering away the life sustaining forces:

> I am charged with poison for my own mind, and the minds of all mankind. Where I felt interest, compassion, sympathy, I am turning into stone. Selfish and ingratitude spring up in my blighting footsteps.
>
> . . .
>
> The change he felt within him made the busy streets a desert, and himself a desert. (Dickens 182)

The Phantom and his gift becomes the medium, the central motif employed by the writer to signify the importance of memory -- the ability to

remember the life's wrongs and injustices, grief and sorrow, pain and suffering, so as to act as a forceful reminder in order to inculcate the virtues of mercy, compassion, and selfishness in man:

> "I have lost my memory of sorrow, wrong, and trouble," said the Chemist, and with that I lost all, man would remember!"
>
> . . .
>
> ". . . why it seems to me a good thing for us, to remember wrong that has been done us?"
>
> . . .
>
> "That we may forgive it." (Dickens 221-223)

Redlaw's journey to the sordid slums with the beast-waif is to reflect upon the insensitivity and inhumanity of the industrialised Victorian world. On their way, they stop three times. First when crossing a churchyard, second to look at the shining moon and the drifting clouds, and thirdly on hearing music:

> The first occasion . . . Redlaw stopped among the graves, utterly at a loss how to connect them with any tender, softening, or consolatory thought.
>
> The second was, when . . . the moon induced him to look up at the Heavens, where he saw her in her glory . . . but where he saw nothing else he had been wont to see, felt nothing he had been wont to feel. .
>
> The third was when he stopped to listen to a plaintive strain of music, but could only hear a tune . . . with no address to any mystery within him, without a whisper in it of the past, or of the future. (187)

The journey becomes an intensely poignant moment which dwells upon Redlaw's inability, his emotional disconnect to respond to these life sustaining images of memory (church), nature (moon), and feelings (music). It portrays him to be no better than a dead man. It fails to arouse any sense of association, beauty or comfort within him. The church, moon, music, remain mere physical facts for him, nothing more. The scene acts as a grim reminder of the condition of the Victorian man who in their quest and greed of material goods and comforts of life had become insensitive and blind to all the beauteous things of life – nature, human emotions and feelings, sensitivity and tenderness.

The Haunted Man stands apart from the other Christmas Books in its religious, moral, and spiritual significance. Dickens aim was not only to present the harsh realities of his time but also to guide his readers to live a better life. He always has a cheerful message to impart – to give courage to the weak and hope to the weary; that the error of thoughtlessness that has crept into life can easily be remedied by love, goodwill, and human sympathy. The Phantom and the curse become his technique to help the morally and spiritually blind Victorian society to redeem itself. The nineteenth century was a time of great unrest on the religious, moral, and spiritual front. Darwin's theory of origin of species had shaken the very foundation of people's religious faith and made them to question their very own existence. Dickens, shows his readers the significance of religious faith and living a morally upright life through the deadening effect of the curse and the redemption finally achieved through the

agency of Milly. Milly's teaching of pure love brings out the importance of charity and geniality in the life of the people. As Redlaw's memory is restored, he cries out in gratitude and acceptance:

> if I tried to lead a good life, I should met in Heaven a bright creature, who would call me, Mother!"
>
> . . .
>
> . . . "who, through the teaching of pure love, has graciously restored me to the memory which was the memory of Christ upon the cross, and of all the good who perished in His cause, received my thanks, and bless her!". (Dickens 227)

Milly acts as a guardian angel caring, consoling, and comforting others, whose sympathetic and tender soul makes their joys and grief, her very own.

The book is a profound statement on the negative impact of industrialisation upon human life. Dickens has taken a serious view of how it impacted different aspects of life for the worst. The description of Redlaw's building is a comment on the city which was dying of overgrowth: the very pulse of life seemed to be strangulated:

> once a brave edifice, planted in an open place, but now the obsolete whim of forgotten architects, smoke-age-and-weather-darkened, squeezed on every side by the overgrowing of the great city, and choked, like an old well, with stones and bricks. (126)

The choking of the cities refers to the unimpeded industrial growth. People migrated in great numbers from villages and small towns to big cities in search of work. A drastic effect of this migration to the industrial cities resulted in the creation of the industrial slums, one of the biggest tribulations of Victorian England. This multitude of labourers -- men, women, and children, working in the factories became victims of industrial and social slavery. Living in the squalid, wretched, and inhuman conditions, they lived the life of a vermin:

> Redlaw looked about him; from the houses, to the waste piece of ground on which the houses stood, or rather did not altogether tumble down, unfenced, undrained, unlighted, and bordered by sluggish ditch: from that, to the sloping line of arches, part of some neighbouring viaduct or bridge with which it was surrounded, and which lessened gradually, towards them, until the last but one was a mere kennel for a dog, the last a plundered little heap of bricks. (Dickens 187)

These slums were a hot bed of chronic diseases and epidemics, hazarding the life of many, especially of children and resulted in high infant mortality rate in Victorian England. In this book, Dolphus Tetterby's worry about his daughter ascertains this fact that an "immense per-centage of babies never attain to two years old" (159). The children who did survive, finally fell victims to a life of denial, want, and drudgery. Tetterby's family perfectly exemplifies this fact. Dolphus Tetterby without any proper income is unable to support his large family, hence his son Master Adolphus is made to work at the

tender age of ten to earn and help his father. It is a heart rendering picture where for a few pennies, these young children were forced to work from dawn to dusk. There lives are but tales of lost childhood and suggest to the reader's mind the struggles of Dickens own childhood in the blacking warehouse:

> Master Adolphus . . . vend newspapers at a railway station, . . . he went to and fro . . . piercing the heavy air with his cry of "Morn-ing Pa-per!" which, about an hour before noon, changed to "Morn-ing Pep-per!" which , in a couple of hours, changed to "Morning Pop-per!" and so declined with the sun into "Eve-ning Pup-per! (Dickens 161)

The writer's description of the Tetterby's family dinner is a comment on the severe economic depression and food crises of the 'Hungry Forties':

> "here's your mother been and brought, at the cook's shop, besides pease pudding, a whole knuckle of a lovely roast leg of pork, with lots of crackling left upon it, and seasoning gravy and mustard quite unlimited . . ."
>
> . . .
>
> There might have been more pork on the knucklebone, which knucklebone the craver at the cook's shop had assuredly not forgotten in craving for the previous customers – but there was no stint of seasoning . . . pleasantly cheating the sense of taste. (164)

The drudgery and wretchedness of such an existence made the youth take to a life of petty crime and dissolute habits. George Swidger lying on his deathbed is its typical example. His condition bespeaks of the increased use of

opium and alcohol among the youth of Victorian England. Alcohol offered them a temporary oblivion of their miserly and miserable life. A factor already worked out with reference to Richard and Meg in *The Chimes*. The demonic vices of gambling and drinking were slowly eating into the very social and moral fabric of the Victorian society. The social evil of prostitution is also reflected upon in course of the narrative. To fulfill the needs of the family, young girls and even married women were forced into prostitution. The young girl "the ruined Temple of God" (Dickens 188) whom Redlaw met in the slum, signifies this dark reality of the times. Lilian, in *The Chimes* is yet another example of it.

Dickens is at his best in showing the present and future of the society through his favourite mode – the child character; in this book, it is the beast waif, whom Redlaw discovers in his house. Through the pictures of an innocent child he tries to rouse the tender feelings and love for the child in the heart of every human being and appeal for sympathy and concern for their being. These innocent children -- neglected, oppressed and lonely are the most highlighted features of his works. They are a grim reminder of the misery of his own childhood. He describes the child as:

> A bundle of tatters, held together by a hand, in size and form almost an infant's, but, in its greedy, desperate little clutch, a bad old man's. . . . A baby savage, a young monster, a child who had never been a child . . . but who, within, would live and perish a mere beast. (150)

For Dickens such a child (beast waif) is the product of society itself. He symbolises the nascent evil of the society in creating it. Redlaw is warned by the Phantom that:

> From every seed of evil in this boy, a field of ruin is grown . . . in many places in the world, until regions are overspread with wickedness . . . Open and unpunished murders in a city's street would be less guilty in its daily toleration. (Dickens 204)

From such a child nothing good can be expected but the widespread of only evil and destruction. Through the child figure, Dickens tries to hold a mirror to his society – to make it reflect and realise that how it is contributing to the proliferation of evil (crime and sin).

The Haunted Man, along with its protagonist – Redlaw, has strong autobiographical undertones. Like his creator, Redlaw is a master of his subject, a renowned professor of chemistry, who "worked in his inner chambers, part library and part laboratory" (126). He is also not much affected by the society but is a victim of personal circumstances and tragedy. As mentioned earlier the death of Redlaw's sister is reminiscent of Dickens' own sister's (Fanny) death. In fact, *The Haunted Man* is expressive of the pain and anguish kindled and intensified by his sister's premature death as well as by the death of his sister-in-law, Miss Mary Hogarth (on 7th May, 1837 at the age of

seventeen), whom he idealised so much so as to wish to be buried in the same grave as hers. The resonance between Redlaw's life and Dickens' is best brought out in Redlaw's altercation with his darker self, the Phantom:

> "Look upon me!" said the Spectre. "I am he, neglected in my youth, and miserably poor, who strove and suffered, and still strove and suffered, until I hewed out knowledge from the mine where it was buried, and rugged steps thereof, for my worn feet to rest and rise on."
>
> "I *am* that man," returned the Chemist.
>
> "No mother's self-dying love," pursed the Phantom, "no father's counsel, aided *me*. A stranger came into my father's place when I was but a child, I was easily an alien from my mother's heart. My parents, at the best, were of that sort whose care soon ends, and whose duty is soon done; who cast their offspring loose, early, as birds do theirs; and, if they do well, claim the merit; and, if ill, the pity." (Dickens 144)

The details of poverty and neglect – of childhood marred with denial and oppression, sufferings from the evils of the developing industrial system are all a grim reminder of Dickens early life. Moreover, he was like his protagonist – Redlaw, a self-made man.

Dickens' chief intention in writing this book is to celebrate Christmas as a season of hospitality, charity, and remembrance. To enforce his message he blends the realistic with the fantastic to create the maximum impact. He unites the social, psychological and the allegorical truth with the fanciful in a very

deliberate manner so as to convey the "apocalyptic truth" (Stone 140) to the society.

The Christmas Books mark a celebration of the Christmas spirit and Christian virtues of love, joy, and kindness for all. They are deliberate and persuasive in their attempt to guide the people in the art of righteous living and conducting themselves in a gracious and humane manner. They are a critique of the individual's (protagonists) action/behaviour as well as the society's responsibility towards the common man. They foreground the significance of Christian virtues in the life of the individual and of others in the society. By evoking the extraordinary 'other' world of supernatural beings (ghosts, spirits, goblins, fairies) with the help of fantasy, Dickens is able to juxtapose the real world with that of alternate reality. His ingenious mixture of fantasy and realism, gentle satire and orthodox wisdom suffuses the Christmas Books with the power of persuasion. As a writer, he straddles both the worlds – the real and the fantastic – so as to reveal the harsh and bitter truth of existence, to cast a pessimistic outlook on fate of humanity and thereby emphasise the need to make the real world a better place to live in.

Dickens use of fantasy situations has endowed the narratives with artistic and thematic beauty. The fantasy mode has proven to be an effective tool to document the evils of the society and to provide an indirect social commentary on the contemporary facts of the Victorian era. The Christmas Books are grounded in the hard facts of – nineteenth century industrial

capitalism, mechanical and affected mode of existence, humiliating experiences of his own childhood, to help arouse sympathy for the poor and the downtrodden, to bring about an ethical and emotional transformation by reviving the Christmas traditions and evoking the Christmas spirit of love and generosity. In the Christmas Books, Dickens has given full reign to his romantic imagination so as to engage the attention and interest of the readers as well as give expression to his reformative zeal and do justice to the task undertaken – to present life as it is and as it should be.

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Chapter Two

George MacDonald: Phantastes

and

Charles Kingsley: Water Babies

CHAPTER 2

(I)

GEORGE MACDONALD: PHANTASTES

George MacDonald (1824-1905), a preacher, novelist, poet, and essayist was one of the most respected authors of his generation in the nineteenth century Scotland. He wrote in nearly every literary genre and is recognised as the "Grandfather of modern fantasy" writings. He graduated from King's College, Aberdeen in 1845 with a degree in chemistry and physical science. To support his living he worked as a tutor to a London family for the next three years. However, his religious enthusiasm made him turn to the study of Theology. In 1850, he became the pastor of Trinity Congregational Church in Arundel, Sussex, but in 1853, he was forced to resign by the members of his congregation because of his liberal theology and unorthodox beliefs:

> the charges made against him were no less extraordinary. He had been arraigned by the elders of his Arundel congregation on two counts: firstly, that he had preached the possibility of life after death for heathen, and, secondly, that he was tainted with what was sinisterly known as "German theology". (Prickett 159)

MacDonald's family was strictly Calvinist in its religious followings. Young George noticing the contrast between the world of nature and the

joyless religion of his family started questioning their religious beliefs. When he went to the university, his religious doubts "were augmented by the general aura of questioning that existed in University-cities, even in 1840" (Calderone 3). While tending a library of an estate-owner during his university years, he had read many Catholic mystics. The reading of the great old books of literature guided him to conclude that Christianity was broader than the narrow religious beliefs followed by his family. His interest in the mysticism of German Romantics greatly influenced the Calvinist religious beliefs that he learned from his family. He also appreciated the English Romantics. His life's experience, reading of literature, growing disillusionment with the orthodox Christianity of his native Scotland, combined together to form the basis of his unique and personal theology – his belief in an ideal unity between God and the individual, and of having faith in His wonderful creations.

After resigning from the church of Arundel, MacDonald moved on from "pastorate to pastorate, being dismissed for his views sooner or later" (6). To support his family of eleven children, MacDonald moved from job to job, lecturing, tutoring, and writing. After writing several essays and books of poems, he published his first novel *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance* in 1858. His earlier preference for preaching and writing poetry later changed to that of the novel (genre) as he discovered it to be a better medium to express and communicate his views:

> novels opened a way for him to express that which was denied him from the pulpit. Through stories he could communicate all the wonder and beauty of God as he had so longed to over the years, "touching hearts and stimulate consciences," and touching them with a power that mere preaching could never have. (Calderone 7)

In his novel, he frequently mentions or alludes to God, thus, indicating his desire to communicate his religious beliefs to his readers.

George MacDonald's novel – *Phantastes* was a great success and it placed him in the literary world as a successful fiction writer. His two fantasy novels for adults – *Phantastes* and *Lilith* – are "often spoken of as two of the best novels ever written in English language" (Short Bio). However, it is *Phantastes* which has allowed MacDonald to become a cult figure in fantasy fiction. *Phantastes* is a story of the quest of a young man, Anodos, searching for his true self. It is "a multifaceted story that played out the road to redemption not so very different from *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Divine Comedy*, or many other stories like it but few told with such Godlike mystical imagination and grace" (Short Bio). Like Lewis Carroll's Alice Books, it is also an episodic story in which the protagonist travels in a fairy land.

On his twenty-first birthday Anodos, the protagonist (along with his legal rights) receives keys of an old secretary which his father has left for him. The next day on opening it, he discovers a hidden cabinet from which emerges a tiny, beautiful woman who tells him that "You shall find the way into Fairy

Land tomorrow" (MacDonald 4) and then vanishes. Anodos discovers the truth of the lady's promise the next day when on waking up, he finds his room gradually transforming into a forest. He enters the forest along a path that lay before him.

As he travels through the forest a young maiden walks past by him and surreptiously speaks to him to trust the Oak, the Elm, and the Beech trees but to beware of the Alder and the Ash. He discovers to his surprise that though it was day time, everything seemed asleep and then remembers "that night is the fairies' day, and the moon their sun; and I thought–Everything sleeps and dreams now: when the night comes, it will be different" (10). When he reaches the cottage of the maiden's mother, she provides him with food and warns him of the Ash who was an ogre. She informs him that they were safe in the cottage as it was guarded by four oaks. She tells him of the fairies that lived in flowers and takes him to visit the little garden to watch the fairies frolicking.

In the evening, Anodos takes leave of his hostess and moves through the forest enjoying the beauty of nature. But as darkness deepened a sense of fear possesed him and soon he comes across the "horrible" Ash. He runs away but being tired stumbles against a tree and finds himself in the arms of the Beech that had taken the form of a woman. She gives him a tress of her hair to save him from further dangers. Thus, he spends the night under her protection and on waking up, finds a girdle of fresh beech-leaves around him.

Enjoying the wonders during his journey, he reaches a cave, the inside of which was covered with moss. Removing the moss from a stone, he finds it more like alabaster, enclosing within it the form of a beautiful woman in marble. Thinking of the fairy stories, he awakens her by singing to her but like an apparition she gleams away towards the woods. While pursuing her, Anodos meets the Knight of rusted armour who warns him about the Maid of Alder-tree and moves on. Remembering how his songs had broken the marble prison of the White lady, Anodos sings again and behold the lady appears. She takes him to a grotto and entrances him to sleep. On waking up he finds a human shaped coffin with the face of the marble lady "albeit pale greenish in hue . . . and with dead lusterless eyes" (MacDonald 48) at the mouth of the cave. She was the Maid of the Alder-tree and not his Marble lady and while he was asleep she had destroyed the girdle of the Beech-tree. She asks the Ash to take custody of him but as the Ash drew near him, the heavy blow of an axe echoed through the forest, forcing them to retreat and disappear into the forest.

After leaving the sepulchral cave, Anodos walks on till he reaches a farmhouse and is welcomed by the farmer's wife. She provides him with food and listens to his story. However, the farmer and his son (unlike the woman and her daughter) refuse to believe in the Fairy Land. The farmer's wife warns Anodos not to go near the house of the ogre and the next morning he continues his journey along the path shown by the farmer's son.

Travelling deeper into the forest, he comes across a hut where a lady appeared to be reading something quietly. In one corner of the hut, he observed a door and despite the lady's warning opened it. It was a closet which had no back wall and from its endless void a dark figure with "ghostly feet" (MacDonald 61) rushed towards Anodos and passed by him. The woman tells him that the dark figure was his shadow and would accompany him everywhere. Realising the woman to be the ogre, Anodos leaves "the Church of Darkness" (77) with the shadow in constant attendance. He makes his way through the woods, conscious of the baleful influence of his shadow, destroying the wonder of everything on which it fell.

One bright noon, he comes across a little maiden, "happy as a child" with a wonderful globe in her hand which produced harmonious music when touched. For three days she keeps company with Anodos, however, on the third day his shadow "inwrapts" the maiden but is unable to change her. The irresistible appeal of the wondrous globe forces Anodos to lay hold of it; but then its music grew in intensity and the globe heaved and vibrated till it shattered. Wailing like a child, the maiden ran away, leaving him in shameful distress. Next he stays in a village where people's appearance changed according to Anodos' distance from them:

> The nature of the change was grotesque, following no fixed rule. The nearest resemblance to it that I know, is the distortion produced in

> your countenance when you look at it as reflected in a concave or convex surface–say, either side of a bright spoon. (MacDonald 69)

As Anodos travelled through a desert region peopled by goblin-fairies, he comes across a small stream. Moving along it, he discovers that the stream is joined by other streams to become a mighty river. As he comes across a boat, he steps into it and allows it to carry him to the Fairy Palace. There he finds a room – the chamber of Sir Anodos, similar to his bedroom in the real world. Happy and confident, he treats himself to a feast before going off to sleep. As Anodos explores the palace, he finds a library where he spends many a happy hours reading different kinds of books. A peculiarity of these wonderful volumes was the power to draw him into their histories, tales, and poems. While reading about fairy life, Anodos found himself among them. According to the book, fairies did not give birth to children instead they found them in forest. Fairy men and women had little to do with one another. When a male and female fairy loved each other, they did not come together but went away from each other to die of their longing and desire.

One story that Anodos reads is of Cosmo von Wehrstahl who purchases a mirror from an obscure shop – "Of course, while I read it, I was Cosmo, and history was mine" (93). When he looks at his room in the mirror it appears extraordinary with the reflection of a lady stricken with sorrow but nowhere to be seen in his room. He goes on loving the lady so much that he pulls her out of the mirror by conjuration. She tells him that she could be freed only when

the mirror is broken. Cosmo hits the mirror with a sword but the mirror disappears with the lady. Cosmo searches the mirror for several days and ultimately finding it, destroys it and sets the lady free. While confessing her love to Cosmo, the lady finds blood running through his fingers and Cosmo dies in her arms with a smile on his face.

In the Fairy Palace, Anodos discovers a great hall leading to twelve other halls each behind a curtain containing the marble statues of dancers. One day he dreams of his marble lady frozen on a pedestal (in one of the twelve halls) and the statues dancing around her. The next evening he finds the pedestal but it was vacant. Once again the power of his song brings the unseen marble lady to life but despite the warning not to touch anything, he embraces her. Writhing out from his arms she runs away, crying that he should not have touched her. He tries to follow her but loses sight of her.

He descends into a great hole where he had last seen her. Passing through a region of goblins and kobolds, he reaches a dreary beach where he finds a boat, climbs into it and falls asleep. On waking up he finds the boat on the grassy shore of a little island. An old woman with lovely, young eyes treats him kindly, like a mother, and gives him food. In her cottage he observes that it had four doors, one in each wall, and was curious to see what lay behind them.

Passing through the first door, the door of Sorrow, he is transported to his childhood days. He finds himself on a farm in his father's estate and witnesses the night when he had a fight with his brother and the next morning

found him drowned. Crying bitterly he returns back. On entering the door of Sigh, he appears in a hall and finds his marble lady (as a normal person) in the arms of the knight of the soiled armour as his wife. "But now the armour shone like polished glass" (MacDonald 151). Through their conversation. Anodos learns that though she admired him, she truly loved the Knight. He also comes to know that the axe blow that had saved him from the Alder and the Ash was that of the Knight and that the Ash was killed by the Knight in a combat.

Next he passes through the door of Dismay and emerges in a street of his home town where he sees his former love but is not able to meet her. Entering her house he opens the door of her room but finds himself in a church and discovers that she was dead. Returning back to the cottage. despite the old woman's warning he enters the door of Timeless. Of the visit. he is unable to recall anything except that he found himself back in the arms of the old woman. She tells him that she had to go through the door of Timeless in order to rescue him. And for doing that she has to suffer punishment of being imprisoned in her cottage under water for a year. She asks Anodos to leave the island immediately and helps him to get away.

On reaching a lonely tower, he is met by two brothers whose castle had been captured by three giants. They were waiting for him to fight the enemy (gaints). In the fight that ensues both the brothers as well as the three giants are killed. Anodos, the sole survivor, then goes to the castle (captured by the

giants) and releases the captives. For his bravery the King honours him with knighthood.

After leaving the castle, Anodos reaches a forest. His shadow that had accompanied him through out his journey, disappears the moment he entered the forest. Soon he meets a knight who looked just like him and orders Anodos to follow him. Upon reaching a "dreary square tower" (MacDonald 178), Anodos is commanded to enter it and is locked inside with his shadow. He realises then that the knight and his shadow were one. After many days of imprisonment, Anodos is set free by the maiden whose globe he had broken. He begs her to forgive him but instead she thanks him "for the light and music of her broken globe were now in her heart and her brain" (182). Thus speaking she goes away. Anodos is so humbled by this experience that he strips his armour, considering himself unworthy to be called a knight. "I have failed" cried he, "I have lost myself – would it had been my shadow" (182) and looking around he discovers his shadow to have disappeared (forever).

Not far from the tower he meets the Knight (beloved of the marble lady) on horse back, singing and dragging a dead dragon behind him. Anodos offers his services to the Knight, to wait upon him as his squire. Together, they arrive at a cottage where the Knight tells the woman and her husband that the dragon was dead and their daughter safe with the hermit. The father rushes to the forest to bring back the child. After taking a little rest and ministering to the child's wounds, they (Knight and Anodos) continue with their journey.

As Anodos and the Knight travel on, they become good friends. Upon reaching a large open space bordered by trees on four sides, Anodos senses evil about the place. They observe a large gathering of people witnessing a ceremony. Six priests had forced a young man to enter a door in the pedestal upon which stood a throne. As they tried doing the same with a girl. Anodos interrupts the proceedings. He tears the great wooden idol from the throne and throws it down. Displacement of the idol reveals a great hole out of which a large wolf like creature rushes out and attacks him. Anodos fights and kills the creature but is himself killed by the guards.

Anodos now lay dead in his coffin, mourned by the Knight and the marble lady. Buried in the ground of the Knight's castle, he now feels death as a blessing. As his soul floats with the cloud, he muses that "it is by loving, and not by being loved, that one can come nearest the soul of another" (MacDonald 201). Suddenly, a terrible shudder goes through him and he finds himself on a hill above his own castle – his home. His sisters receive him with joy and inform him that twenty-one days ago, he had gone missing from his room. Enriched by his experiences in the Fairy Land, Anodos resumes his earthly life with humility and joy.

Phantastes: *A Faerie Romance* is a fantasy story for adults. It is an excellent blend of MacDonald's sense of mysticism and symbolism with the fairy tale elements. The book begins with the blurring of reality and fantasy. The first fairy lady, a tiny woman of two hundred and thirty seven years, enters

into Anodos' world of reality. Her announcement about his visit to Fairy Land prepares the readers to encounter the fairy world and the weird and wonderful events that are to take place later in the story. Unlike the other fantasy stories (Christmas Books and Alice Books) the protagonist of the present narrative does not dream or travel through some medium to reach the fairy world. Instead the fairy land invades his bedroom:

> looking out of bed, I saw that a large green marble basin, in which I was wont to wash . . . in a corner of my room, was overflowing like a spring; and that a stream of clear water was running over the carpet, all the length of the room . . . And, strange still, where this carpet, which I had myself designed to imitate a field of grass and daisies, bordered the course of the little steam, the grass blades and daisies seemed to wave in a tiny breeze that followed the water's flow; while under the rivulet they bent and swayed with every motion of the changeful current . . .
>
> . . . the branches and the leaves designed upon the curtains of my bed were slightly in motion . . . although I dressed in all haste, I found myself completing my toilet under the bough of a great tree . . .
>
> . . . The tree under which I seemed to have lain all night was one of the advanced guard of a dense forest, towards which the rivulet ran. (MacDonald 6-8)

MacDonald has employed all the elements of traditional fairy tale and gothic literature to create the most wonderful tale of fantasy literature. The narrative structure of *Phantastes* being episodic in nature is replete with supernatural events and beings. The supernatural creatures: flower-fairies: fairy

men and women; kobolds and goblins "of all varieties of fantastic ugliness, both in form and features, and of all sizes" (MacDonald 130); vampires like Ash and Maid of the Alder; anthropomorphic animals (rabbits, birds, mice, squirrels, monkeys, and several others, whose conversation Anodos hears with surprise during his journey); anthropomorphic Beech-tree; the Marble-lady; ogre in the Church of Darkness; the three giants; animated statues in the Fairy Palace – all add to the fantastic nature of the tale as well as help the narrative to move forward. Like Carroll's Alice Books, *Phantastes* also includes songs and poetry thus enhancing the aesthetic aspect of the novel.

The fairy tale elements – the interplay of the supernatural and the magical has been employed throughout the book. The wondrous account of the frolicking of flower-fairies is a source of amusing delight for both Anodos and the readers:

> The whole garden was like a carnival, with tiny, gaily decorated forms, in groups, assemblies, processions, pairs or trios, moving stately on, running about wildly, or sauntering hither or thither. From the cups or bells of tall flowers, as from balconies, some looked down on the masses below, now bursting with laughter, now grave as owls: but even in their deepest solemnity, seeming only to be waiting for the arrival of the next laugh. Some were launched on a little marshy stream at the bottom, in boats chosen from the heaps of last year's leaves . . .
>
> . . .

> . . . a group of fairies . . . were talking together around what seemed a last dying primrose. They talked singing, and their talk made a song (MacDonald 17-18)

Like Dickens, MacDonald has used both aural and visual effects to enhance the gothic and fantastic element in order to create the atmosphere of mystery and terror. Anodos senses the horror even before he encounters the horrible Ash. A "vague sense of discomfort" possessed him and the thought that the Ash might be looking for him filled his mind with anxiety and fear. The personification of the moon and the clouds, hiding of the one behind the other, the deepening darkness, all set the mood for the appearance of the vampire like Ash:

> To add to my [Anodos] distress, the clouds in the west had risen nearly to the top of the skies, and they and the moon were traveling slowly towards each other. Indeed, some of their advanced guards had already met her, and she had begun to wade through a filmy vapour that gradually deepened. When she shone out again . . . I saw plainly on the path before me . . . the shadow of a large hand, with knotty joints and protuberance here and there. . . . I lay until fear had frozen my brain. I saw the strangest figure; vague, shadowy, almost transparent, in the central part, gradually deepening in substance towards outside . . . The hand was uplifted in the attitude of a paw about to strike its prey. But the face, which throbbed with fluctuating and pulsatory visibility . . . from changes in its own conditions of reflecting power . . . was horrible. (25-26)

Though the gothic mood and supernatural happenings pervade the book the author has employed the element of magic too in context of Cosmo's story. Cosmo through conjuration brings the lady out of the enchanted mirror. Magic accompanied with the aural and visual effect creates a perfect atmosphere of mystery and awe:

> He . . . took out his book of magic. . . . and on the seventh evening . . . prepared for the exercise of unlawful and tyrannical power.
>
> He . . . drew a circle of red on the floor . . . wrote in the four quarters mystical signs, and numbers which were all powers of seven or nine, . . . the church clock struck seven; and . . . glided in the lady . . .
>
> It was sultry evening. The air was full of thunder. . . . Soon the charcoal glowed. Cosmo sprinkled upon it the incense and other substance which he had compounded, . . . he began with a trembling voice to repeat a powerful incantation. . . . Then he passed to a conjuration stronger yet. . . . At length it seemed as if she suddenly espied him. . . . Suddenly the lady turned and walked out of the door of her reflected chamber. . . . There she stood . . . along beside him, in a thundery twilight and the glow of a magic fire. (MacDonald 106-107)

The Fairy Palace is a lonely castle with several secrets and magical happenings, like those in gothic fiction. When Anodos had his dinner in the Fairy Palace, the food and wine was served to him by invisible hands. He just looked at the thing he wanted and it was brought to him as if it had come by

itself. Similarly, when he entered the basin (not very deep) in the Fairy Palace he found himself:

> miles from land, swimming alone upon a heaving sea; but when my eyes emerged from the water, I saw above me the blue spangled vault, and the red pillars around. I dived again, and found myself once more in the heart of a great sea. (MacDonald 81)

Books in the Fairy Palace had the power to draw the reader inside the book's world. The person reading a story, poem or history in the book became a part of that piece of work. Likewise, the marble lady is brought to life through Anodos's singing; the water could not enter the submerged cottage as long as the old woman kept the fire burning inside it; the song of the maiden with the globe has the power to "do good and deliver people." Such incidents of pure imagination enhance the magic and wonder of MacDonald's created world.

Like Dickens' Christmas Books, the technique of time travel, vignettes shown to the protagonist, and the sudden change of places are also used by MacDonald in *Phantastes*. These techniques are employed when Anodos passes through the different doors in the cottage on the island. While passing through the door of Sorrow, he finds himself back in his childhood days playing with his brothers. On entering the door of Sigh, he is shown the vignette of the marble lady with the Knight. Then passing through the door of

Dismay and entering his former beloved's room he finds himself in a graveyard and her bed turns into her grave.

These techniques together with the incredible minute details of Fairy Land add to the fantastic effect of the story. Every flower in the Fairy world shines with the light of its own; statues in the Fairy Palace dance around the pedestal of the marble lady; the walls of the tower in which Anodos is imprisoned "vanish away like a mist" (MacDonald 178) in the moonlight and again appear with the first faint light of the dawn; in the land of fairy men and women, the "water reflect no forms. . . . on the contrary, the sky reflects everything beneath it, as if it were built of water like ours" (89); fairy women have wings instead of arms and by the colour of their wings it could "be judged in what season, and under what aspects, they were born" (88).

As in Dickens' Christmas Books, the setting in *Phantastes* also corresponds to the protogonist's state of mind and inner self. Everything appears wonderful and amusing to Anodos as long as he was unaware of Ash's presence in the fairy land. His fear or inner turmoil on Ash's appearance is accompanied by rainstorm and thunder in the outer world of nature:

> Great drops of rain began to patter on the leaves. Thunder began to mutter, then growl in the distance. I ran on. The rain fell heavier. . . . My mind was just reviving a little from its extreme terror, when suddenly, a flash of lightning . . . through on the ground in front of me . . . the shadow of same horrible hand. (MacDonald 27-28)

Similarly, the appearance of Anodos' shadow – sinister and mysterious leaves him bewildered and confused; thus making the Fairy Land wonders, dull and ordinary in contrast. Moreover, when Anodos tired and depressed, wanders in search of the marble lady, he finds himself near a dreary sea:

> I stood on the shore of a wintry sea . . . It was bare, and waste, and grey. Hundreds of hopeless waves rushed constantly shorewards, falling exhausted upon a beach of great loose stones that seemed to stretch miles and miles in both directions. . . . Sign of life was nowhere visible. I wandered over the stones, up and down the beach, a human imbodiment of nature around me. (MacDonald 136-137)

Later, in the boat while brooding over his past and dreaming of joys "of restored friendships; of revived embraces; of love . . . pardons implored" (139) he reaches the grassy shore of a little island. And finally at the end of his incredible journey, when a mature and self-satisfied Anodos lay in his grave, content and at peace with his 'self' – it is spring time, "my soul was like a summer evening, after a heavy fall of rain, when the drops are yet glistening on the trees in the last rays of the down-going sun, and the wind of the twilight has begun to blow" (198). Similarly, in case of the Knight, his rusted armour gradually begins to shine out with his noble deeds performed for humanity.

As in the other fantasy works (Christmas Books and Alice Books) graphic illustrations in *Phantastes* are an aid to the understanding and

appreciation of the book. There are various similarities between the techniques used by Dickens and MacDonald in their fantasy writings. Like Dickens, MacDonald also ends his fantasy on an optimistic note. Anodos, like the protagonists of Christmas Books, learns from his experiences in the Fantasy world and matures into a mentally and spiritually stronger being; he comes back to the real world to lead a better life.

MacDonald has adopted almost all possible techniques and elements to produce the most wonderful fantasy story – *Phantastes: A Fairie Romance*. Being a priest by vocation he uses the fantasy mode to preach Christian virtues and morals to his readers. He deliberately names his protagonist Anodos, meaning "without a path" and through diverse characters and vivid incidents that he encounter during his journey (pathless), the author conveys his message – learning to stay on the right path and listen to the voice of God for his spiritual well being.

MacDonald could not preach his unorthodox beliefs regarding God and religion in the church because they were considered to be heretical; he had been forced to resign from the Church as well. As a writer he chose the fantasy genre to communicate his moral and spiritual beliefs for the betterment of man and humanity. Calvinism was the most popular religion followed in the nineteenth century Scotland. MacDonald's family was also strictly Calvinist and "the Scotch Calvinism of the 1800s was a religion based on a belief in Hell even more than in God, out of which everything else flowed" (Calderone 3).

As mentioned earlier, MacDonald "could not help but notice the contrast between the world of nature and the joyless religion" of his family. He always felt that "God must be more than the catechism . . . for had He not made all these other things [of nature] as well?" (Calderone 3). The fantasy mode allowed MacDonald to express freely his simple and firm belief – to have faith in God and His wonderful creations.

Once in Fairy Land, Anodos begins to believe and have faith in its "almost divine aesthetics." But the appearance of his evil shadow ruins his ability to appreciate and have faith. According to Chang, Anodos' "unquestioned faith in Fairyland is symbolic of the simple faith required to believe in God" and his shadow symbolises "the frequent obtrusion of doubts" that ruins man's ability to believe in God and His creations. This aspect of the narrative has a special relevance in context of the loss of faith and belief in God during the Victorian Age vis-à-vis Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. The appearance of his shadow initially disturbs him but with time he begins to feel comfortable in its presence. "But the most dreadful thing of all was, that I now began to feel something like satisfaction in the presence of the shadow. I began to be rather vain of my attendant, saying to myself, "In a land like this, with so many illusions everywhere, I need his aid to disenchant the things around me" (MacDonald 66). MacDonald employs irony here to guide and warn his readers not to grow complacent in spite of their doubts. Instead of blindly accepting and following the orthodox religious beliefs, they should

question them, clear their doubts and have a firm faith in their religion and God.

The author also uses the concept of shadow to reflect upon the opposing forces of good and evil within human beings. Anodos' shadow arouses the impiety (evil) in him that tempts him to take hold of the maiden's globe:

> my [Anodos] desire to know about the globe, which in his [shadow] gloom . . . grew irresistible. I put out both my hands and laid hold of it . . . I held it in spite of her attempts to take it from me . . . in spite of her prayers, and, her tears. The music went on growing in intensity . . . and the globe vibrated and heaved; till at last it burst in our hands. (MacDonald 69)

Evil in man makes him insensitive to the feelings of others. It has a negative impact on everything around him. MacDonald illustrates this point through the skilful use of imagery as Anodos' shadow destroys everything on which it falls:

> The flowers on the spot where I had lain were crushed to the earth: but I saw that they would soon lift their heads and rejoice again in the sun and air. Not so those on which my shadow had lain.
>
> In few days, . . . it [shadow] began to coruscate, and shoot out on all sides a radiation of dim shadow. . . . But wherever a ray struck, that part of earth, or sea, or sky, became void, and desert, and sad to my heart. (64- 65)

By presenting the negative effects of evil forces, the author imparts the powerful moral to his readers to lead a life of goodness/simplicity/purity.

He has also employed the image of light and darkness in *Phantastes* to illustrate the forces of good and evil. The passage read by the woman (who later turns out to be an ogre) sums up MacDonalds message of hope:

> "So, then, as darkness had no beginning, neither will it ever have an end. So, then, is it eternal. . . . Where the light cannot come, there abideth the darkness. The light doth but hollow a mine out of the infinite existence of the darkness. And ever upon the steps of the light treadeth the darkness; yea, springeth in fountains and wells amidst it, from the secret channels of its mighty sea. Truly, man is but a passing flame, moving unquietly amid the surrounding rest of night; without which he yet could not be, and whereof he is in part compounded." (MacDonald 60)

Man's nature makes him susceptible to the forces of evil but in this world of darkness he should "carve out a path of light". The image of man as "a passing flame, moving unquietly amid the surrounding rest of night" elucidates that in his short life span, he is provided with opportunities to conquer the forces of evil with the help of the good ones and that he should not let go of these chances.

The source of evil in Anodos, his shadow, emerged from the closet in the house of the ogre because he chose to disobey the ogre's advice. In fact, most of the problems that Anodos encounters in Fairy Land are the outcome of

his disobedience to the warnings and advice of persons he met there. Disobeying the advice of the woman in the farmhouse, he enters the house of ogre and encounters his shadow; despite the warning of the Knight of rusted armour, he allows himself to be lured by the Maid of the Alder and nearly escapes his death; in spite of the inscription "TOUCH NOT" he hugs the Marble lady in the Fairy Palace which ultimately leads him to the land of goblins and kobolds; his disregard of the old woman's stopping him, he enters the door of Timeless which leads to the old woman's one year confinement under water. It is apparent from all these examples that MacDonald places obedience over and above experience (that one wants to gain). In all these incidents, Anodos acts out of irresistible desire, ignorance, greed, or arrogance – always assuming that he knew the best. According to the author, succumbing to these vices corrupts human nature; one must learn to overcome them.

Phantastes also deals with the vice of 'Pride'. After the killing of the three giants and being honoured with knighthood, Anodos is filled with pride. He forgets that the glory/fame that he was enjoying came at the cost of the lives of the two brothers who had fought along with him in the battle against the gaints. The darkening of his shadow refers to the enhancement of evil (pride) in him. Anodos' pride leads to his becoming imprisoned in a narrow tower in the enchanted forest. He does not even try to get away from it, until the song of the girl whose globe he had broken, delivers him the power to open the door of his prison. Coming out Anodos said "hardly knowing what I did. I

opened the door. Why had I not done so before? I do not know (MacDonald 181). His pride and ego prevented him to fight for his freedom but the maiden's song grants the realisation and courage to do it. Humbled by the maiden's act, he strips off all his armours that had made him feel proud: "to think of myself (will the world believe it?) as side by side with Sir Galahad!" (177). MacDonald posits the view that pride leads to man's psychological imprisonment, restricts his power to think about his own benefit and also that of others. Through Anodos' shedding of his armour, the symbol of his pride, the author asks his readers to "face the source of evil inside them" and fight it to achieve "inner peace and self-awareness" and to "enrich their world with goodness" (Harnsberger).

In course of his journey in Fairy Land, Anodos is helped by different characters. This aspect of the tale subscribes to the virtue of helping others without the hope of getting anything in return. MacDonald was well-known in his parish for his benevolence and his home was a place of refuge and hospitality for the needy. In Fairy Land, various female characters provide shelter to the hungry and tired Anodos – the old lady even goes through the door of Timeless to save him at the cost of her one year confinement under water; the maiden whose globe he had broken, rescues him from the prison. She tells him:

> I have something so much better. I do not need the globe to play to me; for I can sing. I could not sing at all before. Now I go about everywhere through Fairy Land . . . And wherever I go, my songs do good, and deliver people. And now I have delivered you, and I am so happy. (MacDonald 181-182)

The Beech-tree lady saves him from the horrible Ash and sings:

> "I saw thee ne'er before;
> I see thee never more;
> But love, and help, and pain, beautiful one,
> Have made thee mine, till all my years are done." (31)

Learning from these disparate experiences, Anodos helps the two brothers to fight the battle against the three giants knowing that he could lose his own life. Later he offers himself as a squire to the Knight and accompanies him in the performance of his noble deeds. Towards the end of the novel, Anodos sacrifices his life in a fight with the wolf-creature "who has been oppressing a nation and making them worship him as a god" (Calderone 22) and by killing the wolf-creature he redeems the place from evil.

Thus, MacDonald preaches to his readers to help without the thought of getting a return; to perform their duties sincerely in this world because the motive and commitment of such an act would be a source of spiritual fulfillment and contentment. The author elucidates this view through the conversation between Anodos and the Knight:

> "Somehow or other," said he [knight], "notwithstanding the beauty of this country of Faerie, in which we are, there is much that is wrong in it . . . . All a man has to do, is to better what he can. And if he will settle it with himself, that even renown and success are in themselves of no great value, and be content to be defeated, if so be that the fault is not his; and so go to his work with a cool brain and a strong will, he will get it done; and fare none the worse in the end, that he was not burdened with provision and precaution."
>
> "But he will not always come off well," I ventured to say.
>
> "Perhaps not," rejoined the knight, "in the individual act; but the result of his lifetime will content him." (MacDonald 189)

Thus, the "rusted armour" of the Knight in the narrative gradually begins to shine like a polished surface, reflecting the glory and brilliance of his noble deeds done for humanity.

"*Phantastes* explores many themes of human experience. The foremost among them is what C. S. Lewis called "good death" – dying to one's desire, giving them up for love of someone else" (Calderone 20). MacDonald believed that those who love selflessly, find true joy for themselves. In the novel, he deals with a number of love relations to prove his belief. The Beech-tree lady saves and shelters Anodos. She even gives him a plaited lock of her hair (that transforms into a girdle of beech) for his safety. When Anodos departs he hears a song "I may love him, I may love; for he is a man, and I am only a beech-tree" (MacDonald 32). The Beech-tree lady loved Anodos without the thought

of being loved in return. In the library of the Fairy Palace, Anodos read about Fairy men and women that their desire for love "lead them to go away and find a place to die rather than to come together. The death is the most beautiful thing in their world" (Calderone 20). In another story, Cosmo sacrifices his life to free his beloved from the enchanted mirror. He dies in his beloved's arms with a smile on his face; the smile is suggestive of the satisfaction and joy he experienced in dying for his beloved. Learning from these experiences, Anodos too sacrifices his love on seeing the marble lady become the wife of the Knight of rusted armour, whom he considered to be a better person for the lady than himself. After his death, Anodos in contemplating about true love becomes the mouthpiece of MacDonald's belief:

> that it is by loving, and not by being loved, that one can come nearest the soul of another . . . love gives to him that loveth, power over any soul beloved, even if that soul know him not, bringing him inwardly close to that spirit; a power that cannot be but for good; for in proportion as selfishness intrudes, the love ceases, and the power which springs therefrom dies. Yet all love will, one day, meet with its return . . . behold its image in the eyes of the beloved, and be humbly glad. This is possible in the realms of lofty Death. (MacDonald 201)

His failures and experiences in Fairy Land, teach him and the readers "the ultimate virtues of self-sacrifice, humility, and self-knowledge". The novelist emphasises the power and importance of "inner strength and goodness to

triumph over one's weaknesses" (Harnsberger). In the novel, Anodos develops from "a young man concerned with pleasure and experience to one concerned with valor, purity and obedience" (Calderone 19).

Anodos journey of twenty-one days in Fairy Land paralles his journey of twenty-one years in the real world. It becomes the narrative of his (protagonist's) personal growth. In the bildungsroman, one watches him developing from a child – enjoying childish experiences with fairies, to an adolescent preoccupied with the game of love and romance (of his marble lady), to a mature adult concerned with acts of chivalry and bravery (sacrificing his love and the killing of the evil wolf-creature). As a book, *Phantastes* reads like an allegorical tale dealing with Anodos' moral and spiritual growth (the conflict between virtues and vices, good and evil). However, it also reflects/captures some important facts and details of its writer's life.

MacDonald's life had not been an easy one – it was marked with tragedies and hardships. When only eight years old he had lost his mother to an illness and greatly felt her loss. This sense of loss is evident from the overwhelming presence of various female characters extremely loving, affectionate and protective (lady in the cottage protected by four oaks, Beech-tree lady, the lady in the farmhouse, the maiden with the globe, and the old woman in the cottage on island). The love, care, and protection they shower on Anodos, is what MacDonald had missed and deeply desired for. These ladies

along with love also provide food and comfort to Anodos. In this aspect they also reflect the person of Lady Byron, MacDonald's friend and financial benefactor. After having resigned from the church of Arundel, MacDonald suffered great hardships. In order to support his wife and eleven children, he moved from job to job to find food, shelter and comfort for them but to no avail. In these hard times, Lady Byron provided him money to support his family.

The great old books of literature and the German Romantics that MacDonald read while tending the library of a nobleman had made a great impact on his understanding of religion and God. The magical power of the books in the Fairy Palace, to draw their readers into their world, refers to the influence they have on the reader's mind and understanding. The epigraph that introduces each chapter of *Phantastes* ranges from the Bible to Shakespeare to the Romantics and highlights MacDonald's wide reading and scholarship.

The influence of German and English Romantics on MacDonald is very much evident in the novel when he describes and deals with the beauty and mystery of nature through his created Fairy Land. He believed in the protective power of nature – the cottage of the woman is protected from the dangerous Ash by the four oaks on its corners. Furthermore, the role of the Beech-tree also supports this view. Through the personification of the Beech-tree expressing its feelings, MacDonald asks his readers to live in harmony with nature in this materialistic world.

In the nineteenth century (both in England and Scotland) the rapidly developing industrial system had greatly increased the greedy materialism in the society. The man of the farmhouse calls for the pig's trough to be filled and adds "Let them swill, lass! . . . Gluttony is not forbidden in their commandments" (MacDonald 52) and living in Fairy Land he knows nothing about the reality as he has "been too busy to make journeys of discovering into it" (55). Through these statements MacDonald reflects on the worst excesses of materialism which according to him were responsible for man's detachment from the world of nature as well as his moral and spiritual decline. In such a fast changing materialistic world, people also changed according to the requirement of the world. In the novel, Anodos spends seven days in a village where people's appearance changed according to their distance from him. This change in appearance is suggestive of the mean, selfish and vested outlook of the people whose behaviour changed in accordance to their needs. Preoccupied with monetary gains and opportunities, they lived in a world dictated by hypocrisy and pretensions.

The fantasy genre provided MacDonald a medium to convey his messages and to preach to the readers without being under any pressure to be restricted or stopped. He endorses the aesthetic appeal of fantasy literature through an observation of Anodos that reflections are lovelier than reality:

> Why are all reflections lovelier than what we call the reality?–not so grand or so strong, it may be, but always lovelier? Fair as is the gliding sloop on the shining sea, the wavering, trembling, unresting sail below is fairer still. Yea, the reflecting ocean itself, reflected in the mirror, has a wondrousness about its water that somewhat vanishes when I turn towards itself. (MacDonald 73)

"MacDonald implicitly compares fictional works to real images and fantastic works to reflected ones" (Confresi). According to MacDonald, the impact and aesthetic appeal of a fantasy work is far superior to that of realistic fiction. An advocate of the fantasy genre, MacDonald's *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance* is a living testimony of his belief.

Phantastes – a fairy tale for adults is outstanding in its imaginative insight, narrative powers, and subtle yet powerful moral messages. It is a fascinating story of a young man's (Anodos) journey into the fantastic world of romance and imagination. In this Fairy Land, he encounters various supernatural happenings with supernatural characters both good and evil – spectre, ogre, fairie men and women, goblins, giants, anthropomorphic plants and animals. Caught in the magic and wonder of this other world/reality, his spiritual wellbeing is threatened but from which he emerges triumphantally with greater inner strength, goodness and self knowledge. Expressive of MacDonald's liberal views and unorthodox religious beliefs, the book resonates with a conscious moral purpose – to instruct and to uplift mankind; to

sweep away errors of life so as to reveal its underlying beauty and above all to believe and imagine in the existence of God.

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CHAPTER 2

(II)

CHARLES KINGSLEY: WATER BABIES

Charles Kingsley born on 12 July, 1819 was a writer of poetry, novels, historical works, sermons, religious tracts, scientific treatises, political, social, and literary criticism. He was one of the most prolific writer of the Victorian age. Besides being the priest of the church of England for much of his life, Kingsley was "a chaplain to Queen Victoria from 1859, and to the Prince of Wales from 1861", "a canon of Chester Cathedral from 1870 to 1873, and of Westminster Abbey from 1873" (Manlove 13). An academician and a historian, he has also been labelled as, "Christian Socialist", "Protestant controversialist", "muscular Christian", and an "amateur naturalist". Despite being a priest, Kingsley had great faith in science. Unlike the other churchmen of his times, he never felt his religious beliefs threatened by the scientific inventions and discoveries regarding the evolution of man. In fact he was one of the first to praise Charles Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species* (1859).

Kingsley was also a prominent social reformer and a political activist. He had intense sympathy for the underprivileged classes and deeply felt the need for social reform. After becoming a curate in 1842, in addition to performing religious services, he started working passionately to improve the

appalling physical, social, and educational conditions of his parishioners and later for the downtrodden working class. He strongly believed that the moral and educational reforms for the working class would eventually change the prevailing conditions of nineteenth century England.

Like Charles Dickens, he had faith in the didactic value of fiction and therefore used his novels to express his views, make people aware of the condition and problems of his times, and motivate them to change for the betterment of society. According to Albert C. Baugh, Kingsley's "books express the stirring social conscience of the mid-century." He was a very versatile writer, whose works reveal the diversity of his interests and "his native inability to keep still" (Manlove 13). According to C. N. Manlove "he was in many ways a restless man, his views subject to flux, his interest manifold to the point of incoherence, and they and his friendships alike often impulsive and fleeting" (13). Kingsley's only fantasy work "*The Water Babies* (1863) is a representative 'olla, or hotchpotch'" (14) of his various interests.

Like Lewis Carroll's *Alice Books*, Kingsley wrote *The Water Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby* for a specific person – his youngest son, Grenville. It was first serialised in the *Macmillan's Magazine* on monthly basis from August 1862 to March 1863 and was later published in book form in 1863. The book met with immediate success and retained its popularity well into the twentieth century. In 1963, it won the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award. In the book, Kingsley has skilfully blended the fantastical elements of a children's story

with the contemporary social issues of Victorian England. *The Water Babies* addresses many issues and problems of the Victorian age: child-labour (in this case chimney sweeps), education, poverty, sanitation, public health, pollution (due to industrialisation), religion and the evolutionary theory (Charles Darwin's book: *On the Origin of Species*). The impact of the novel was such that within a year of its publication, the Chimney Sweepers Regulation Act of 1864 was passed which outlawed the use of climbing boys and imposed a fine of ten pounds (a considerable sum of money at that time) on any master sweep who sent a child to climb a chimney.

The Water Babies is the story about Tom, a young chimney-sweep who is cruelly treated by his master Mr. Grimes. One day, Tom is taken to a great mansion, Harthover House, to clean chimneys. On their way to the great mansion, Tom and Grimes meet a poor Irishwoman who tells them "those that wish to be clean, clean they will be; and those that wish to be foul, foul they will be. Remember" (Kingsley 13). While cleaning the flue- system, Tom loses his way and coming down the wrong chimney finds himself in the room of the Squire's daughter Ellie, who was then sleeping. In a room all dressed in white, Tom for the first time in his life encounters his own "ugly, black, ragged figure" (20) in a looking glass that makes him burst into tears. His crying wakes up Ellie who on seeing dirty Tom screams out of fright. This brings in her nurse, who mistakes him for a thief and raises an alarm. Terrified, Tom

runs away from the house, with the Squire, Grimes, and all servants chasing him. The strange Irishwoman helps him from getting caught.

In order to make good his escape, Tom runs several miles over the moors and finally reaches the brink of Lewthwaite Crag. While going down the crag he thought he could hear the church bells ringing so loud "that they must be inside his head" (Kingsley 29) and the river far below singing a song to him. Thousand feet down the crag, he arrives at Vendale where he is helped by an old schoolmistress who gives him food and shelter, but he could not rest as the Irishwoman's words and the church bell kept ringing in his head. Thus, he decided to see "what a church was like inside" (37) and goes out to wash off the soot and dirt from his body. All this while the Irishwoman had followed him. Just before Tom reaches the river, she steps down the water (as she was the Fairy Queen) to warn the other fairies not to show themselves to Tom until he was ready to see them. Hot and thirsty, and so eager to be clean, Tom "tumbled himself as quick as he could into the clear cool stream" (39) and within two minutes of his submersion he turns into a water baby. Meanwhile, the Squire and his men realising their mistake that Tom was no thief, trace him to the stream, only to find his dead-body floating in the water.

Tom now a water baby meets other water creatures: caddis-baits, otters, lobster, dun-flies, trouts, eels, dragon-flies, and several others. Being naughty by nature he teases them but later makes friends with them. One day during a rain-storm, Tom in a sudden flash sees three beautiful little water girls (water

babies), floating with the flood and singing "Down to the sea, down to the sea" (Kingsley 71). He sets out after them and reaches the salmon river where he catches sight of Grimes and others poaching salmon at night. Suddenly the keeper sets upon them and in the ensuing struggle, Grimes falls into the river and gets drowned. Tom flees in terror and finally reaches the sea and is befriended by a lobster. Curious to know about water babies, he asks several sea creatures but none could help him. One day Ellie's Professor Ptthmllnsprts, who had come to the sea resort with her, catches Tom in his net. Despite Ellie's insistence, he refuses to accept Tom as a water-baby and tries to classify him variously as a Holothurian and a Cephalopod. Angry and hurt, Tom bites him and slips back into the water. In trying to stop him, Ellie falls down and fractures her skull. Later she dies and the fairies take her away with them. Back in water, Tom tries to free his friend lobster caught in a fisherman's pot and for his good deed, as a reward he gets to meet his first water baby.

The water babies take him to St Brandan fairy isles where he meets the two great fairy sisters, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid and Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby. Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid rewarded good water babies by giving them sweets and punished those who had done something wrong. Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby who came only on Sundays, loved the water babies; she hugged them, and played with them, singing songs to them all the while. Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid punishes Tom for being naughty for teasing the sea creatures and for stealing sweets – his body grows prickles all over like

a sea-egg. Miserable and frightened Tom confesses his mistake to Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. She brings Ellie, now a water-baby, to teach and help him to become good and get rid of his nasty prickles. Tom gradually reforms with Ellie's help. Every Sunday Ellie went home to "the most beautiful place in all the worlds" (Kingsley 142) and Tom yearned to go with her. Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid tells him that for going home on Sunday he has to do many first(s): he must first go where he does not like, do what he does not like and help somebody he does not like. She narrates to him the story of Doasyoulikes who being lazy had degenerated into apes and finally became extinct. She warns Tom of a similar end. She inspires him to go to the Other-End-of-Nowhere and help Grimes who was being punished there for his sins. She guides him to go first to the Shiny Wall where through the gate that never was opened, he would reach Peacepool and Mother Carey's Haven, who would tell him the way to the Other-End-of-Nowhere.

Thus, Tom sets out on his journey. On his way he meets the King of Herrings, who advises him to meet the last of Gairfowl standing at Allalonestone to know the way to the Shiny Wall. But instead of telling him the way, Gairfowl narrates to him the sad story of her lonely life and why she did not marry her deceased sister's husband for the sake of honour. As Tom moves on, he come across petrels, Mother Carey's own chickens. They take him to the mollys, who fly to the Shiny Wall carrying Tom on their back. Their Tom dives under the great white gate that never was opened and after seven

days and seven nights of darkness, he sees "the light and clear clear water overhead" (Kingsley 170) and reaches Mother Carey. She directs him to move backwards by looking into the dog's eyes in order to reach the Other-End-of-Nowhere. Encountering many creatures and passing through many places: Waste-Paper-Land, the sea of slops, to the mountain of messes, and the territory of tuck, the centre of Creation, the Island of Polupragmosyne, the great land of Hearsay, the Isle of Tomtoddies, Oldwivesfabledom, Leaveheavenalone, he finally reaches a huge reformatory where the truncheon takes him to Grimes, stuck in a chimney. On meeting Tom, a repentant Grimes confesses to his sins and his own tears melt the chimney away. Thus, he is released and granted freedom to sweep the crater of Etna. Having fulfilled the conditions of going to the Other-End-of-Nowhere, Tom is taken back by the fairy to St Brandan through a wonderful "backstairs" (208) and is united with Ellie. He is able to go home with Ellie on Sundays as well as on some weekdays too, and we are told he (Tom) is now a great man of science.

The Water Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby is one of the first children's story with a fully developed fantasy world. It opened the way for other such fantasies as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), and George Mac Donald's *At The Back of the North Wind* (1871). The title of Kingsley's book itself suggests that the reader is going to read a fantasy story. The writer begins the story in a traditional fairy tale manner with "Once upon a time there was a little chimney-

sweep and his name was Tom" (Kingsley 5) and employs all the elements of a traditional fairy tale: fantastic world, fairies and other supernatural creatures, anthropomorphic animals, personified objects, magical happenings, and the like. These supernatural beings and events are an integral part of the story and help it to move forward. Kingsley's fantastic world is no imaginary land as it seems to exist in the real world. At a point in the novel when Ellie was alive, Prof. Ptthmllnsprts had caught Tom, a water baby in his fishing net. They both had seen him, thus proving that Kingsley has placed his fantastic world within the real world. Consequently, he does not need to employ the dream technique or any other medium to pass through (e.g. Carroll's looking glass) so as to introduce his readers to his fantastic world:

> As do so many other Victorian fantasy writers, Kingsley makes use of "another world," but his underwater world is essentially a part of this one and is ready created for him. No fictional fantasy could equal the variety and peculiarity of the life he found teeming in the rivers and seas; there was no need to pass through any looking glass beyond that of reflecting surface of the water itself to find an inversion of our own world. (Prickett 145)

In the novel the "metaphysical elements are constantly translated into physical" (Manlove 24). The fairies (Bedonebyasyoudid, Doasyouwouldbedoneby, Mother Carey, and Sea-Mother) are personification of virtues and natural principles. Even the names of creatures (Doasyoulikes,

Ptthmllnsprts, Prometheus, Epimetheus) and places in water world (Allalonestone, Peacepool, Shiny Wall, Land of Readymade, Happy-go-lucky Mountains, Allfowlsness, Stop, Waste-Paper-Land, sea of slops, mountain of messes, territory of tuck, great land of Hearsay) are both descriptive and representative of their actions and purpose in the story. They remind the readers of the characters in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, such as Mr. Wordly Wiseman or Faithful. Moreover, personified creatures (caddis-fly, dragon fly, foppish dun-fly, lobster, molly, trouts, salmon, the dog and several others) and personified objects (bells, wheels, flowers, truncheons) enhance the fantastic nature of the narrative. Kingsley employs such a technique to present and discuss those aspects of Victorian England that he found wanting and was desirous to arouse in his readers the consciousness and concern for the betterment of real world conditions.

Like Dickens, Kingsley also plays with time, uses aural and visual effects, makes sudden transition of places, and employs magic. In Dickens' Christmas Books they are all used to create an atmosphere of horror and suspense but in Kingsley's *Water Babies* they add to the beauty of the fantasy and make it more interesting. Apart from the drowning of Grimes there is no night scene in the novel. Time moves fast or slow according to the demand of the individual scene. When Ellie becomes a water baby and is brought to teach Tom his lessons, they both "liked them so well that they went on till seven full years were past and gone" (Kingsley 141). Towards the end of the story when

Tom returns after "many a hundred years" (Kingsley 210) from the Other-End-of-Nowhere and meets Ellie, they looked at each other for "seven years more, and neither spoke nor stirred" (210). In an earlier scene when Tom escapes from the Harthover Place and moves down the Lewthwaite Crag, he begins to hear the church-bells ringing and the river singing a song to him. On reaching Vendale, in the outhouse of the Schoolmistress:

> he heard the church-bells ring so loud, close to him too, that . . . he would go to church, and see what a church was like inside . . . But the people would never let him come in, all over soot and dirt like that. He must go to the river and wash first . . .
>
> And all of a sudden he found himself, not in the outhouse on the hay, but in the middle of a meadow, over the road, with the stream just before him. (37)

The novel is replete with visual effects having a magical quality. For example: just before Tom reaches the riverside, the Irishwoman stepping into the stream turns out to be the Fairy Queen; Tom transforms into a tiny water baby; he grows prickles all over the body on stealing sweets; his journey moving backwards (by looking into the eyes of the dog) to the Other-End-of-Nowhere; Grimes tears of repentance melting away the chimney and clearing soot from his body; towards the end of the story Tom and Ellie on looking upon the Fairy Queen are reminded of all the other fairies they had met in the water world, "she was neither of them and yet all of them at once" (211). In all

these scenes the impact of the visual imagery is brilliantly effective in creating the feel of the fantastic. Such scenes are a confirmation of Kingsley's creative genius.

Like Dickens, Kingsley also includes illustrations in his fantasy. They help the reader to visualise his created world. Without the illustrations it is hard for them to imagine a water baby of a few inches with a "lace-collar of gills about his neck" (Kingsley 53), or the other inhabitants of the fantastic world, as well as the other unforgettable, wondrous incidents in the novel. These graphic representations help the readers to understand and appreciate the story in a better way.

Kingsley employs the fantasy mode to bridge the gap between didactic literature and pure story telling. The created fantastic world, its creatures, and happenings in *The Water Babies* keep his social commentary from becoming monotonous and boring; in fact his lessons give meaning to the story and avoid it from becoming insincere and a mere fairy tale. In course of the novel, Kingsley directly interacts with his readers, and intersperses the narrative with his comments and moral perspective. "*The Water Babies* is one of the very rare examples in literature of inverted didacticism" (Prickett 141). The author constantly reminds his readers that the story is a make-belief one. He even ends it by commenting playfully "But remember always, as I told you first, that this is all a fairy tale, and only fun and pretence; and therefore, you are not to believe a word of it, even it is true" (Kingsley 214). By saying this he very

significantly points to the fact that a deeper meaning underlies the story than it being merely a simple fairy tale for children.

The Water Babies deals with Kingsley's favourite themes. His reformist zeal makes him take up the issue of the chimney-sweeps (child labour), lack of education and basic amenities (clean water and sanitation) for the downtrodden of the society, the condition of the slums (residential area of the working class):

> Once upon a time there was a little chimney sweep, and his name was Tom. . . . He lived in a great town in the North Country, where there were plenty of chimneys to sweep, and plenty of money for Tom to earn and his master to spend. He could not read nor write, did not care to do either; and he never washed himself, for there was no water up the court where he lived. He had never been taught to say his prayers. (Kingsley 5)

Tom represents the plight and ill usage of poor children by their work master for financial gain. He "had been the slave of Grimes, and, in wider sense, the slave of the whole oppressive economic system" (Prickett 150). The rapid growth of industrial system in the nineteenth century had increased the number of child labourers in factories and other places as they were cheap labour. Like Tom, these miserable waifs were deprived of their childhood and casually accepted the brutalities of life as "the way of the world":

> He cried when he had to climb the dark flues, rubbing his poor knees and elbows raw; and when the soot got into his eyes, which it did every day in the week; and when his master beat him which it did every day in the week; and when he had not enough to eat, which happened every day in the week likewise. And he laughed the other half of the day . . . As for chimney-sweeping, and being hungry, and being beaten, he took all that for the way of the world. (Kingsley 5-6)

The number of child chimney-sweeps had been constantly increasing since the day of the first report on the subject in the 1780s and in the nineteenth century their death-rate was shocking. Most of them suffered from the cancer of scrotum caused due to their crawling naked through the sooty flues. Kingsley tries to capture the attention of the people and to sensitize them to one of the most serious issue (child-labour) of Victorian England through the story of Tom – a chimney sweep.

The description of Tom's journey from his town to Harthover House brings out the contrast between the urban and the rural world; civilisation and nature. It is a celebration of the natural world. In moving Tom away from the polluted atmosphere of the town into the lap of nature, the author wants to awaken the people to realise their weary and dreary existence. In the Victorian era, the industrial revolution had transformed the beautiful towns and idyllic country sides into polluted, noisy, and dreadful places:

> out of the court, and up the street, past the closed window-shutters, and the winking weary policemen, and the roofs all shining grey in the grey dawn.
>
> They passed through the pitmen's village, all shut up and silent now, and through the turnpikes; and then they were out in the real country, and plodding along the black dusty road, between black slag walls, with no sound but the groaning and thumping of the pit-engine in the next field. But soon the road grew white, and walls likewise: and at the wall's foot grew long grass and grey flowers, all drenched with dew; and instead of the groaning of the pit-engine, they heard the skylark saying his matins high up in the air, and the pitbird warbling in the sedges, as he had warbled all night long. (Kingsley 9)

The Harthover House itself "is not only an architectural the symbol of nature but in many ways a living thing" (Manlove 36). Like nature it is complex, chaotic, varied and has grown with time. Kingsley writes, "built at ninety different times, and in nineteen different styles" it was:

> a great puzzle to antiquarians, and a thorough Naboth's vineyard to critics, and architects, . . . now the house looked like a real live house, that had a history, and had grown and grown as the world grew. (16-17)

The novelist gradually and skillfully removes his readers from "the world of men to that of nature" and accomplishes this transition when Tom falls into the stream and becomes a water baby. There he lives in the company and complete protection of nature. Kingsley being an optimistic person does not see Tom's sudden death as a sad end of a young life instead he celebrates it

as a chance to grow afresh and get and learn all that he (Tom) was denied in the real world. He grows up to become "a great man of science" writes Kingsley (212). His journey from the narrow and shallow stream to the river and then through the sea to the great ocean symbolises his growing knowledge and experience. And through the creatures he meets and the happenings that befall Tom during his journey, Kingsley moralises, satirises, mocks, and presents the true picture of his time.

Personified creatures – caddis-bait, dragon-fly and foppish dun-fly, satirise the snobberies of the upper class society of Victorian England. The detailed description of the caddis-bait building her house is a satirical comment on the vanity of fashionable ladies of the nineteenth century:

> he [Tom] went into a still corner, watched the caddises eating dead sticks as greedily as you would eat plum-pudding, and building their houses with silk and glue. Very fanciful ladies they were: none of them would keep to the same materials for a day. One would begin with some pebbles; then she would stick on a piece of green wood: then she found a shell, and stick it on too; and the poor shell was alive, and did not like at all being taken to build houses with: but the caddis did not let him have any voice in the matter, being rude and selfish, as vain people are apt to be; then she stuck on a piece of rotten wood, then a very smart pink stone, and so on, till she was patched all over like an Irishman's coat. Then she found a long straw, five times as long as herself, and said, 'Hurrah! My sister has a tail, and I'll have one too'; and she stuck on her back, and marched about with it quite proud, though it was very inconvenient indeed. And, at that, tail

> became all the fashion among the caddis-baits in that pool . . . But they were quite right, you know; for people must always follow the fashion, even if it be spoon-bonnet. (Kingsley 57)

Apart from satirising the fads and fashion trends, use of a live shell by the caddis and not allowing it even to speak, highlights the insolence and the self-interest of the high-class society. The nineteenth century industrial England, guided by the norms of monetary gains was home to the financially strong section of the society (capitalists/industrialists) who never cared for the underprivileged people. They used the poor workers in their factories to make profit, never allowing them to voice their needs and speak for their rights (proper wages and limited working hours in the factories). Kingsley realised that the growing industries as profit making enterprises would impact the working class negatively. The economic surge would only lead to further exploitation and oppressive/miserable conditions for the poor labourers by the capitalists. This fact is forcefully brought out through the salmon and trout episode. "The specific difference between salmon and trout Mr. Kingsley interprets as a difference between enterprise and industry on the one hand, and stupid greediness on the other" (Tener 66). The conversation between Tom and salmon exemplifies this fact:

> 'Why do you dislike the trout so?' asked Tom.

> 'My dear, we do not even mention them, if we can help it; for I am sorry to say they are relations of ours who do us no credit. A great many years ago they were just like us; but they were so lazy, and cowardly, and greedy, that instead of going down to the sea every year to see the world and grow strong and fat, they chose to stay and poke about in the little streams and eat worms and grubs; and they are very properly punished for it; for they have grown ugly and brown and spotted and small; and are actually so degenerated in their taste, that they will eat our children.' (Kingsley 79)

The beautiful dragon-fly, another vain creature that could not see "a yard before his nose; any more than a great many other folks, who are not half as handsome as he" (62), suggests the short-sightedness and selfishness of the bourgeois of the society who never cared for the suffering of the lower class, cocooned as they were in their own world of luxury and comfort. Tom's meeting with the foppish dun-fly who had left his wife to enjoy the pleasures of high living, and thinks that it will not cost him much as he had no mouth or inside to feed. Through the dun-fly, the author (a religious man) mocks and holds up a mirror to those men of the society who did not fulfill their familial duties and moved in the society as respectable persons. He says:

> He [dun-fly] had grown as dry and hard and empty as a quill, as such silly shallow-hearted fellows deserve to grow.
>
> But, instead of being ashamed of his emptiness, he was quite proud of it, as a good many fine gentlemen are, and began flirting and flipping up and down. (65)

Kingsley indirectly addresses the issues which negatively impacted the Victorian England. Pollution was one of the major problems created by the rapid expansion of the industries. The smoke and wastes from these industries created all kinds of pollution and polluted everything – air, water, land, and noise. Hazardous to health they adversely affected the people by causing several diseases and epidemics to break out. In presenting the harmful effect of pollution on water babies, the novelist points to the deplorable, disgusting living conditions of the population (mainly working class) in the industrial slums. The water babies' work is to clean the sea, the author explains. They mend all "the broken seaweed, and put all the rock-pools in order" and "plant all the shell again in the sand" (Kingsley 117) after the storm swept everything away. But they never visit the places which are polluted:

> Only where men are wasteful and dirty, and let sewers run into the sea instead of putting the stuff upon the fields like thrifty reasonable souls: or throw herring's heads and dead dog-fish, or any other refuge, into the water; or in any way make a mess upon the clean shore – there the water babies will not come, sometimes not for hundreds of years (for they cannot abide anything smelly or foul), but leave the sea-anemones and the crabs to clear away everything, till the good tidy sea has covered up all the dirt in soft mud and clean sand, where the water-babies can plant live cockles and whelks and razor-shells and sea-cucumbers and golden-combs, and make a pretty live garden again, after man's dirt is cleared away. And that, I suppose, is the reason why

> there are no water babies at any watering-place which I have ever seen. (Kingsley 118)

The novelist also takes up the issue of infant mortality which (in Victorian England) was particularly high among the poor section of the society. The reasons were many: the inhospitable living conditions of their habitat (industrial slums which were the breeding ground of epidemic diseases like cholera, malaria), improper health services, increased use of drugs and opium among children – all of these find a mention in the story. Water babies are these children who died very young, writes Kingsley:

> there were the water babies in thousands more than Tom, or you either could count. – All the children whom the good fairies take to, because their cruel mothers and fathers will not; all who are untaught and brought up heathens, and all who come to grief by ill-usage or ignorance or neglect; all the little children who are overlaid or given gin when they are young, or are let to drink out of hot kettles, or to fall into the fire; all the little children in alleys and courts, and tumbledown cottages, who die by fever, and cholera, and measles, and scarlatina, and nasty complaints which no one has any business to have, and which no one will have some day, when folks have common sense. (122)

As a writer/reformist, he wants to draw the attention of his contemporary readers towards these problems of Victorian England. An optimist by nature and with a conscious moral purpose, he shows a hopeful and better future for

mankind; (only) if the people understood the problem and were willing to change the conditions for the betterment of the society. The fairy Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedone showers motherly love on the water babies and they in return adore her. Their excitement on seeing her, expresses their intense want of love and care that was denied to them in the real world:

> when the children saw her, they naturally all caught hold of her, and pulled her till she sat down on a stone, and climbed into her lap, and clung round her neck, and caught hold of her hands; and then they all put their thumbs into their mouths, and began cuddling and purring like so many kittens. . . . And Tom stood staring at them . . .
>
> . . .
>
> But she took Tom in her arms, and laid him in the softest place of all, and kissed him, and patted him, and talked to him, tenderly and low, such things as he had never heard before in his life; and Tom looked up into her eyes, and loved her, and loved, till he fell fast asleep from pure love. (Kingsley 130-131)

By arousing people's sympathy for the water babies, Kingsley encourages them to be caring and loving towards the orphans and the neglected children in the world around them. This he firmly believed could bring about a positive change in the society.

Nineteenth century was the time of revolutions and general unrest in every sphere of life. Besides showing the effects of the industrial revolution on

the social system, *The Water Babies* also deals with the religious, educational and political structure of Victorian England.

Kingsley ridicules "the cram-systems of education and examination" (Tener 68) through the creatures on Isle of Tomtoddies with "all heads and no bodies" (Kingsley 192). The inscription on a pillar "playthings not allowed here" on the shore of this island and Tomtoddies' song "I can't learn my lesson: the examiner's coming" (193) refers to the plight of children in the traditional public schools of Victorian England which had a very rigid and repressive atmosphere. Tom observed that all the inhabitants of the island were turnips, radishes, beet, and mangold wurzel, without a single green leaf among them. An old stick tells him that:

> 'there were as pretty little children once as you could wish to see, and might have been so stiff if they had been only left to grow up like human beings . . . but their foolish fathers and mothers . . . kept them always at lessons . . . everything seven times over . . . till their brains grew big, and their bodies grew small, and they were all changed into turnips . . .'
>
> . . .
>
> . . . their legs have turned to roots and grown into the ground, by never taking exercise, but sapping and moping always in the same place? (195-196)

The author suggests that such a system of education instead of improving the knowledge of children proved to be detrimental and harmful for their mental

growth. He also refers to the earlier system of education and by condemning it, too, in comparison with the educational system of his time, he makes people reflect upon this issue seriously:

> For in the stupid old times, you must understand, children were taught to know one thing, and know it well; but in these enlightened new times they are taught to know a little about everything and to know it all ill; which is a great deal pleasanter and easier, and therefore quite right. (Kingsley 95)

The Waste-Paper-Land "where all the stupid books lie in heaps" (183) and from which the people make a "very good trade" refers to the "pedestrian cautionary tales" that were popular prescribed reading for children in Victorian times. These useless books made a great portion of children's leisure reading and hence come in for scathing criticism.

Kingsley ridicules the insincerity and two facedness of the political system of his age when Tom visits Allfowlsness. At Allfowlsness, the description is of hundreds of hoodie-crows holding their great assembly and the "stump-orator" giving speech on people's liberty. A pretty, young lady-crow is accused for having "stolen no grouse-eggs, and had actually dared to say that she would not steal any" (164). She is subjected to a public trial and is killed for defying the law. The author comically exposes the double standards and hypocrisy of the political and legal system of Victorian England thus:

> But they are true republicans, these hoodies, who do every one just what he likes, and make other people do so too: so that for any freedom of speech, thought or action which is allowed among them, they might as well be American citizens of new school. (Kingsley 164)

The sad story of Gairfowl (the only one left of her race) standing on Allalonestone – is all about her not marrying the gentleman who proposed to her because he was her deceased sister's husband. The incident is a satire on the rejection of Monckton Milnes' Bill in March 1862 "concerning the marriage to the spouse of a dead brother or sister" (Manlove 20).

The Water Babies significantly touches upon the scientific inventions and discoveries of the nineteenth century. Kingsley himself being an "amateur scientist" (13) presents his views on the subject through the story of the two brothers Prometheus and Epimetheus. He mocks the inventions of useless mechanical contraptions in the nineteenth century through the boastful character of Prometheus who:

> invented all sorts of wonderful things. But, unfortunately, when they were set to work, to work was just what they would not do: wherefore very little has come of them, and very little is left of them. (Kingsley 175)

On the contrary, the character of Epimetheus refers to the scientific discoveries and inventions done with experience and for the benefit of man:

> Epimetheus . . . always looked behind him, and did not boast at all . . .
>
> . . .
>
> 'But he was a very slow fellow . . . And very little he did, for many years: but what he did, he never had to do over again. (Kingsley 175-176)

The *Water Babies* also draws upon the scientific/religious controversies of the age which were leaving the Victorian people confused and skeptical. The publication of Charles Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, presented a new conception of man and universe. His theory of evolution shook people's religious belief and faith as it denied the Biblical concept of Creation and the existence of God. This led people to question their very own existence. The novel provides an answer to all such questions which were disturbing the minds of the Victorians. Kingsley was a well known supporter of Darwin's theory of evolution. In *The Water Babies*, the conversation between the narrator and a disbelieving reader about the existence of water babies helps the readers to understand Darwin's theory:

> A water baby? You never heard of a water baby. Perhaps not. That is the very reason why this story was written. There are a great many things in the world which you never heard of . . .
>
> 'But there are no such things as water babies.'
>
> How do you know that? Have you been there to see? And if you had been there to see, and had seen none, that would not prove that there were none. . .

'But surely if there were water babies, somebody would have caught one at least?'

Well. How do you know that somebody has not?

'But they would have put it into spirits, or into the *Illustrated News*, or perhaps cut it into two halves, poor dear little thing, and sent one to Professor Owen and one to Professor Huxley, to see what they would each say about it.'

. . .

'But water baby is contrary to nature.'

. . .

You must not say that this cannot be, or that is contrary to nature. You do not know what Nature is, or what she can do . . .

. . .

No water babies, indeed?. . . . There are land babies – then why not water babies? *Are there not water-rats, water-flies, water-crickets . . . and so on, without end?* (Kingsley 45-48)

Thus, Kingsley convinces his reader that there are things in this world to be believed in, without having any visual proof of them. This idea of belief, he applies to Darwin's theory of evolution and tries to make it acceptable to the disbelieving readers.

The incident involving Ellie, Professor Ptthmllnsprts and Tom (a water baby) is a comment on people who refused to believe in Darwin's theory of evolution. The Professor refuses to believe in the existence of water babies, despite having seen Tom (water baby). He even challenges Ellie of having seen one. He does so because he did not want his theories and concepts to be proved

wrong in front of a child. Kingsley teaches his readers to accept and appreciate new ideas as they can be true. He writes:

> if the professor had said to Ellie, 'Yes, my darling, it is a water baby, and a very wonderful thing it is; and it shows how little I know of the wonders of nature, . . .' Ellie would have believed him more firmly, and respected him more deeply, and loved him better, than ever she had done before. (Kingsley 100)

Kingsley's belief in Darwin's theory of evolution never shook his faith in God and Christianity. He was a man of religion, a priest and his whole life was a confirmation of it. He believed that just as faith is needed for religion, so it is required for scientific theories. He teaches his readers to accept scientific theories without losing their faith in religion. Thus, it is not surprising that religion is a dominant theme in *The Water Babies* and contributes largely to the moral purpose of the book. Kingsley's use of religious imagery and allegory is skillfully executed. At a point in the story, Tom hears the church-bells ringing and the Irishwoman's words "those that wish to be clean, clean they will be: and those that wish to be foul, foul they will be" (13) echoing in his head. The Irishwoman's statement refers not to the physical but spiritual cleanliness; for her clean are those (men) who follow the ways of Christ and foul are those who are nonbelievers. Tom chooses to be clean and in doing so he chooses the path of religion and faith. He goes to the river to make himself presentable for the

church, but being extremely tired he drowns and transforms into a water baby. The metamorphosis he goes through is a sort of baptism:

> Tom was quite alive; and cleaner, and merrier, than he ever had been. The fairies had washed him, you see, in the swift river, so thoroughly, that not only his dirt, but his whole husk and shell had been washed quite off him, and the pretty little real Tom was washed out of the inside of it, and swam away. (Kingsley 51)

The "husk" that is left behind and is buried in the churchyard is only a physical thing as Tom was still alive as a water baby. Kingsley suggests that the cleaning (baptism) Tom undergoes was a personal experience and did not require any ritual or ceremony which people mostly perform when a child is baptised. According to the writer, if a person chooses to follow a religion, he should do it from the heart without any form of public display.

At the end of the tale, Grimes too undergoes a baptism. When Tom forgives him and tries to help him, he realises his mistake and begins to weep and "his own tears . . . washed the soot off his face and off his clothes" (206) and they melted the chimney down in which he was caught. Though Grimes is freed but the fairy warns him that "disobey me again, and into a worse place still you go" (206). Tom's act of forgiving Grimes is a lesson in forgiveness an act of Christian kindness and mercy (virtues) that the writer wants to teach to the people. This incident also mirrors his views regarding hell and divine

punishment. The Fairy's reference to a "worse place still", allows Kingsley to put forward his own concept of hell. He believes that there is no final hell but an intermediate state:

> the absolute certainty of resurrection, and hope that this, our present life, instead of being an ultimate one, which is to decide our fate for ever, is merely some sort of chrysalis state, in which man's faculties are so narrow and cramped, his chances (I speak of the millions, not the units) of knowing the good so few, that he may have chances hereafter, perhaps continually fresh ones to all eternity. (Manlove 41)

The punishment in the intermediate state is to make the guilty aware of his crime. In *The Water Babies* punishment mirrors the crime for which it is awarded, for example, Grimes is stuck in the chimney for making little boys (chimney-sweeps) climb up and clean the sooty chimneys. Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid's way of punishing doctors, foolish ladies, careless nurserymaids, and cruel schoolmasters also highlights this fact:

> Every Friday she punishes those who have mistreated children: doctors by literally giving them a taste of their own medicine; careless nurserymaids by running into pins into them and wheeling them about in prams with tight straps across their stomachs; schoolmasters by beating them and giving them lines of Hebrew to learn. (46)

Kingsley was a firm believer in 'poetic justice' (virtues are rewarded and vices punished). Tom is rewarded the company of other water babies for helping the lobster and acting by the law of Doasyouwouldbedoneby; the spirits of the old Greenland skippers are turned into mollys, to eat whale's blubber for being saucy and greedy; the whole race of Doasyoulikes degenerated into apes and finally got extinct because they were too lazy. These examples are a guide to morality and behaviour, and preach Christian values. In this regard Kingsley further mocks the "positive philosophy, collecting multifold experience, but refusing to learn their meaning" (Tener 68) through the Pantheon of the Great Unsuccessful:

> politicians lecture on the constitutions which ought to have marched, conspirators on the revolutions which ought to have succeeded, economists on the schemes which ought to have made everyone's fortune . . . There philosophers demonstrate that England would be the freest and richest country in the world, if she would only turn Papist again. (Kingsley 186)

The great land of Hearsay where all the inhabitants continuously run for their life day and night "entreating not to be told they didn't know what" (188) chaffs the "orthodox fanatics who believe in hearsay, and don't want to be set right" (Tenner 68). Kingsley introduces such characters to ridicule those aspects of life which he did not like and thus guide his reader to become a better person.

A single narrative dealing with so many issues/aspects results in digressions and inconsistencies. But *The Water Babies* is a story with inconsistencies at both, the surface level as well as at the allegorical level of the narrative. In certain scenes the author is very precise in giving the exact details: Tom's exact length after turning into a water baby (3.87962 inches) or the height of tide raised (.3,954,620,819 of an inch) due to his tears. While in other instances, for example, in context of time, he allows it to run fast or slow according to the need of the individual scene: Ellie grows into a beautiful woman waiting for Tom for "many a hundred years" and when finally they meet they look at each other "for seven years more, and neither spoke nor stirred"; and then surprisingly there is description of only one night scene in the whole story. At the allegorical level too, it gets quite confusing whether "*The Water Babies* is about life, or life after death" (Prickett 158). If Tom is dead, one would like to ask, how can he grow up to become "a great man of science" and "plan railroads, and steam-engines, and electric telegraphs, and rifled guns, and so forth" (Kingsley 212). However, the answer to this can be derived from the story itself. Tom's journey to the Other-End-of-Nowhere by going the whole way backwards while steadily looking into the eyes of the dog can be considered his journey back to life. Further, Kingsley has twice mentioned in the novel that "people's soul make their bodies just as snail makes its shell" (138). It helps us to conclude that according to the author, the physical body is of no significance (a point already discussed on p. 160-161) of

this chapter). Thus Tom's life as a water baby can be considered as a rebirth which provides him a chance to achieve all that he had been denied as a sweep. The end of the book is in keeping with the good fairytale tradition where a moral lesson has been attached to it.

The *Water Babies*, a didactic moral fable deals with the dark world of Victorian evils through methods of fairytale fiction. Kingsley, adapting the light tone of fairytales has used all the fantastical elements to convey the moral lesson to both children and adults alike, in a gentle and entertaining manner. His aim is to make one realise the miraculous power of divine reality underlying the world of nature that aids spiritual regeneration. The lesson in cleanliness is in context of both physical and spiritual hygiene. Tom, a chimney-sweep, escapes from the harsh conditions of Victorian life by turning into a water baby. In the magical water world (alternative reality) of fairies, talking animals and sea creatures, he along with the readers confronts aspects of the real world in new wondrous forms. The underwater adventures of Tom not only help him to overcome his "tomfooleries" (weaknesses) but also provide an exposé of the pressing social, political, religious issues and prejudices of the time/period (child labour, education, morality, faith). By blending the fantastic and the real world, the book offers the reader the hope and faith in humanity, and to work for a larger charity, goodwill and forgiveness – indeed to become a better person.

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Chapter Three

Lewis Carroll: Alice Books

(I) Alice's Adventure in Wonderland

(II) Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There

CHAPTER 3

(I)

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, the creative and imaginative author of Alice Books and other wildly playful imaginative works is best known as Lewis Carroll. After his graduation from Christ Church College, Oxford he remained there to teach mathematics. At Oxford, Carroll freelanced in variety of journals, writing humorous prose pieces, satires and verse, exploring theories of dual identities, working out mathematical and symbolic logic texts, and inventing word games and puzzles. His works are a wonderful expression of his strong sense of mathematical beauty and the delight he took in writing them – the mathematical games, puzzles, logic, paradoxes, magic tricks etc. It is considered that Carroll's fascination with puzzles, anagrams, and various other solitary games (he included in his writings) are a result of his stammering and shy, conservative nature that made him something of a loner:

> Carroll's obvious fondness for games, language puzzles, and worlds of fantasy and imagination . . . was identified early, and endlessly demonstrated in his decided flair for entertaining his siblings especially his sisters, which perhaps explains (though not entirely satisfactorily) his life long fascination for little girls. (Bose xiii)

Carroll liked the company of little girls and lacked any kind of romantic interest in adult women. In company of adults he stammered but with little girls he felt comfortable and spoke normally. He had friendship with many little girls but Alice Liddell, daughter of Oxford Don Dean Liddell who became the muse for the Alice Books was his favorite:

> Carroll's love of female children — and his clear desire to socialise with them — developed out of some deep, private fear of mature sexuality and its necessary complexities. Certainly, his inclination to escape two worlds — of the adult's and reality – was well taken care of in the long hours that he spent entertaining children with his fantastical stories. (Bose xvi)

Carroll is a great satirist but unlike Swift his satire is mild. His fantasies are very pleasant and hilarious to read but beneath their calm and sober narrative lay the harsh reality of the Victorian World. According to Brinda Bose, "Carroll . . . perfected the art of diverting into comedy that seems threatening, allowing the horror to peep through the veneer of laughter that his works generates" (xxvi). He creates almost entirely "unrealistic worlds that are rooted in quasi–realistic settings and characterisation" (Egervary). His imaginary worlds are peopled with strange creatures that cast a reflection on the realistic world. The process of transition from the realistic to the fantastic world in his writings mostly takes place through the medium of a dream and when this does not happens, travel of another sort (through some other medium

– rabbit hole or looking glass) takes place. But Carroll never blurs the boundary between the real and the fantastical worlds; he explicitly describes the mediating dream state and thrusts the fantastic elements into the real world. He discovered the rule of "nonsense" and used it as a device for making unsaid 'said'. "His deliberate verbal plays and nonsense verse are full of rebelliousness" (Bose xxvi). Carroll's "nonsense" and logic are intimately connected and are a source of his particular turn of humour. Coupled with the logic went his exceptional knowledge, understanding, and insight into children's psyche:

> It was his training in formal logic – as Peter Alexander, himself a professional logician, points out – which enabled him to build 'a setting within which inconsistency would appear inevitable, and so convincing; or, more precisely, showed him how to *use* a common fairy tale setting to contain more than any normal fairy tale ever contained.' (Green xix)

In his use of "nonsense", satire, parody he consistently did away with the earlier tradition of children's books i.e. moral lesson in every tale.

His style of writing is such that he establishes a relationship with the reader. Throughout his stories he continues to speak to the reader which brings them close to each other. Instead of moralising, he prefers to put the reality before the reader and leaves the interpretation to them. His fantasy stories are not pure prose; they also include poetry and cover a variety of styles and

literary techniques. Our reading of Alice Books, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* allow us to observe and appreciate his style and techniques. These books have a unique place in the nonsense literature of the western world. As mentioned earlier, they are a wonderful repertoire of his fondness for mathematical games, puzzles, logic, paradoxes, magic tricks, riddles, and every variety of word play especially pun, anagram, inversion, jokes, and acrostic verse. Alice Books are filled with anthropomorphic plants and animals, human playing cards, living chess-pieces and the like. The visual imagery in these books is unparallel:

> In addition to Lewis Carroll's verbal conception of the fantastical, his illustrator John Tenniel enlarges Wonderland with visual portrayals of the fantastic inversions and alternations of perspective and relative size. Visual illustration immediately immerses the reader into the book's world. (Carter)

Carroll's interest in the game of cards and chess, provide the background for these two immortal fantasies. In these dream narratives the material is slight and scrappy but the interpretation is extremely rich. Apart for being enjoyed for the extra-ordinary imaginative world that they create, they can also be studied for a deeper understanding and insight into complex Victorian age. Nineteenth century was an age of revolution in every field – mechanical, intellectual, scientific, social, economic, political, religious, and

artistic. The anxieties caused because of these revolutionary tendencies "lie closer to the surface of Alice's dream" (Bose 105). The visual imagery and the fantastic visions of the characters in Alice Books, reveal the true picture of the time. They present a totally disturbed world with no order in it. The whole system was in total chaos. The underlying deeper meaning provides immortality to these humourous fantasies.

The satire, allusion, intentional symbolism in these books can only be understood and appreciated by mature readers. They are replete with incidences that reflect the wide-awaken anxieties suffered by the Victorians as a result of industrialism, consumerism, laissiz-faire capitalism, limited representative democracy, and mechanically measured time as a dominant force in their daily life. Carroll being a very sensitive person presents these harsh realities in a very humourous manner. He maintains a perfect balance "between his recaptured child-self and the literary skill and logical judgments of the clever adult" (Green xxii).

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was originally told as a story to three daughters (Lorina, Edith, and Alice) of Oxford Don, Dean Liddell during a memorable boat trip on 4th July, 1862. On Alice's request, Carroll wrote it down and completed the book in February 1863. The original name of the book was *Alice's Adventures Underground* which was later changed to the present name at the time of publication. The book appeared on 4th July, 1865 and was an immediate critical success. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is the story of

a seven year old girl Alice who bored by the book her sister was reading to her, follows a white rabbit and falls down the rabbit hole. When the fall ends she finds herself in the Wonderland where she meets anthropomorphic animals, animated playing cards as well as encounters several fantastic happenings. Through the incidents Alice experiences in the Wonderland, Carroll is able to explore and comment upon the problems of his time. The story in the Alice Books is in the form of varied incidents, which cannot be dealt in the way as of the other selected novels/works in this study.

Carroll begins the hilariously subversive dream story – Alice with a very ordinary, almost dull scene where she gets dissatisfied with the book her sister was reading to her. Her thought "what is the use of a book . . . without pictures or conversation?" (Carroll 25) attacks the didactic and moralist children's books which were in fashion during the nineteenth century. Bored with her current activity Alice gets attracted to a talking White Rabbit who takes out a watch out of his waistcoat-pocket and exclaims that he will be late. The anthropomorphic White Rabbit mocks the Victorian man who has become a desperate slave to his busy schedule of growing industries and greed for more money and power. The author uses the White Rabbit instead of explicitly describing the mediating dream state to introduce Alice and the readers to the fantastic nature of Wonderland. The very opening of the narrative, excites in every reader a child's delight and curiosity. The expectations thus aroused are not allowed to go unsatisfied as throughout the book the spirit of make-believe

is perfectly sustained. Alice's entire journey is suffused with humour and this gives to the satiric passage a comical rather than a bitter air.

Alice follows the Rabbit and falls down the large rabbit-hole. During the fall Alice's thoughts and activities reflects upon the burden of domestication that a girl bore in the Victorian age. She is more conscious of putting the marmalade jar in its proper place rather than thinking about the consequences of the fall. She continuously talks to herself about how many miles she had fallen, what latitude or longitude she had got to. about different places. She refers to her lessons and education and seems very proud of her learning. But the information she remembers from her lessons is either incomplete or wrong. The writer here refers to the memory based educational system which he meant to satirise. The schools had an extremely rigid and oppressive atmosphere. Carroll himself had gone to such a school and hated it. His dissatisfaction with the educational system thus comes to light with the references he makes to it at several points during Alice's journey.

At the end of the fall, Alice finds herself upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves. She looks up but it is dark overhead. She discovers another long passage and the White Rabbit in front of her. This long passage marks another transition for Alice in the Wonderland. She hurriedly follows the White Rabbit but is unable to keep it in sight. As a result she loses him. As she journeys along she reaches a long, low hall with doors all around. Alice tries every door but all were locked so she walks to the middle of the room. There she finds a

three- legged table made of solid glass with a tiny golden key on it. The key fits into a little door (about fifteen inches high). The door opens out into the loveliest garden with bright flowers and cool fountains. Alice wishes to enter the garden but she is too big for the door. Carroll has uses such devices (tiny golden key, three-legged solid glass table) to enhance the visual imagery and to intensify the effect of fantasy:

> she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway . . . Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope!, . . . so many out-of –the-way things had happened lately' that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible. (Carroll 28-29)

She reaches back to the table in hope of finding another key or some books of rules to shut up like a telescope. This time she finds a bottle with the label 'DRINK ME' on it. Initially Alice hesitated to drink it as she had read several stories about little children getting hurt because they did not abide by the rules taught to them. The allusion to the story books is to make fun of "the pedestrian (and sometimes gruesome) cautionary tales" (Bose 115) that were common in Victorian times and made up a considerable portion of children's leisure reading:

> she [Alice] had read several nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them: such as that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long . . . and she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked 'poison,' it is almost sure to disagree with you, sooner or later. (Carroll 29)

However, her curiosity gets the better of her and she drinks it and soon starts to shrink, feeling as if "shutting up like a telescope" (30). Now only ten inches high, she could pass through the door to enter the garden, but the key on the glass table was beyond her reach. She begins to cry as all her efforts to get it fail. She tries to control herself by trying to act in a mature manner:

> 'Come, there's no use in crying like that!' said Alice to herself, rather sharply. 'I advice you to leave off this minute!' . . . this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people! (31)

Alice's attempt at pretending to be two people is a reminder of Carroll's own dual nature. In company of adults he was reserve and reclusive but in the company of small children (especially girls) he was very frank and friendly.

In the next sequence of the narrative, Alice finds a glass box under the table with a cake in it. On the cake was written "EAT ME" in beautiful letters. This constant mention of something to eat and drink is a reference to the "Hungry Forties", a reminder of 1830s and 1840s as a period of economic

depression and severe food shortage in England. Alice finishes the cake and it makes her grow about nine feet tall. She takes up the golden key and hurries to the garden. But entering it was more hopeless than ever as now she was too big in size. Alice sits down and starts crying, shedding gallons of tears that form a large pool around her, reaching half down the hall.

After sometime the White Rabbit enters the scene. He was in a great hurry and as Alice tries to talk to him, he it scurries away, leaving behind the white kid gloves and a large fan, he was carrying. Alice takes up the gloves and fan, and starts fanning herself. She thinks "How queer everything is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual . . . the next question is, Who in the world am I?" (Carroll 33-34). Alice's stream of thoughts and her changing shape and size is a reference to the fast changing Victorian world which was in a state of constant flux – with the latest scientific discoveries and technological advances. The increasingly materialistic, competitive society driven by mechanical innovations and mechanistic standards of the market became a threat to the very identity of the Victorian man. The revolutionary tendencies and publication of Charles Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species* (1859), made the Victorian man to question his own existence and the belief in God. The common man's faith was shaken and the best minds lost all their religious convictions.

In a state of nervous excitement Alice begins to recite the multiplication table, geography, poetry but everything comes out wrong. Suddenly she

realises that because of fanning her size had reduced to two feet and as a result she slips in her own pool of tears. Soon she sees a Mouse that too, like her, had slipped into the pool. In a matter of time, the entire pool becomes crowded with other creatures – birds and animals that had fallen into it. With Alice leading the way, the whole party swims to the shore. This happening is a symbolic representation of the effects of industrialisation; the socio-economic scenario of the creation of the industrial slums. In the nineteenth century a large population had migrated to the cities from villages and small towns in the hope of finding work in the factories and industries. This population created the industrial slums where labourer's large families lived in confined unhygienic spaces without proper light, sanitation and drainage system. The conditions in these slums made them a centre of vices, crimes and diseases.

Having reached the shore they plan to play "Caucus-race" so as to dry themselves. The "Caucus-race", the Mouse's incoherent/meaningless speech, the discussion between the Duck, Dodo and Eaglet all allude to the English political scene. The elegant oratory and lofty speeches of the Victorian politicians were beyond the understanding of Victorian man. Their deeds were not for the betterment of the common man but for their own benefits. The condition of the poor section of Victorian society was miserable and no serious laws were constituted to improve it. The sad long story that the Mouse narrates to Alice, attacks the corrupt legal system of Victorian England. The manner of

compared to that of the puppy, she was afraid that she might become food for the hungry puppy. Both these incidents are a reference to the "Hungry Forties".

In the grass, peeping over the edge of a mushroom, Alice observes a Caterpillar smoking a hookah. Her adventure with the Caterpillar, in its "unpleasant state of mind" speaking in a "languid, sleepy voice" (Carroll 57) is a serious comment on the drug addicted youth of Victorian England. During the period of industrial growth, there was a tremendous increase in the consumption of opium among working children and youth as it provided them temporary relief from the harsh reality of their existence (an aspect alluded to in Dickens' Christmas Books). This addiction to drugs and alcohol ultimately led them to their degradation and degeneration. The Caterpillar informs Alice of the mushroom's magical property: that eating one side of it will increase her size and the other decrease it. This idea of eating or drinking something that led to a change in size and shape refers to the mind altering drug induced experiences.

Next, Alice visits a four feet high house in an open place by maintaining her size: "nibbling first at one end and then at the other side of the mushroom, and growing sometimes taller and sometimes shorter" (66) till she is able to achieve the desired height. The novelist's intention to ridicule the frivolous and pretentious attitude of the upper class is evident from the way he describes the following incident. A Frog-Footman opens the door of the house to see a Fish-Footman who has brought an invitation for the Duchess to play croquet with

the Queen. The size of the invitation, almost equal to their size, mocks the hypocrisy of the British upper class. The Footmen's livery, curled powdered hairs, their manners, and most important their appearance (of a fish and of a frog) speaks of Carroll's satiric intentions. The visual imagery of the scene enhances the comic element in the story and emphatically states the author's point of view.

On entering the house, Alice finds the Duchess nursing a baby, the cook stirring a large cauldron full of soup, and a Cheshire cat "sitting on the hearth and grinning from ear to ear" (Carroll 70) In order to show off her knowledge and impress the Duchess, Alice says to her that "the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis" (71). However, the ignorant Duchess mistakes the word 'axis' for 'axes' and orders the cook to chop off Alice's head. But the cook instead begins to throw everything within her reach at the Duchess and the baby. The whole scene mocks at the absurdities of adult behaviour – the royal authoritative extremes, and questions their rationality. A commonly held belief of the elite class was that the child and the working class were both alike – extremely irresponsible, impulsive, childlike, and self-indulgent. However, Carroll inverts this perception by presenting authoritative figures of the Duchess along with her cook as immature, foolish, irresponsible, in fact stupid. He questions the authority of adults and of the royalty and mocks at the commonly held prejudices of his age.

The description of the Duchess "singing a sort of lullaby . . . and giving it [baby] a violent shake at the end of every line" (Carroll 71) and then handling it (her baby) over to Alice to play croquet has subjective overtones. The image of a mother separating the baby from herself is marked by autobiographic suggestiveness; in fact it is a detail borrowed from Carroll's own childhood, expressing both a want and a denial, psychological in nature. He was the third child and the eldest son of eleven children. Though, Carroll's mother was very caring and had great love for him but it was soon usurped by the younger siblings as they demanded her attention. The author's anger at being deprived of his mother's love and care so early in life is expressed forcefully in the following lines:

'Speak roughly to your little boy,
And beat him when he sneezes
He only does it to annoy,
Because he knows it teases.' (72)

As Alice carries the baby out into the open air, she hears the baby grunt. Looking at its face she is dismayed to see the baby turning into a pig. This image of the baby turning into a pig is suggestive of the drug abuse and its harmful effects on children which took toll of their health. As mentioned earlier, during the Victorian period there was a widespread use of opium

among the working class members. Statistics claimed that five out of six families consumed opium habitually.

Leaving the little creature to trot away into the woods, Alice is startled to see the Cheshire Cat sitting on a bough of a tree and grinning. Lost in Wonderland, she asks the Cat for direction who points her the ways to the house of the Hatter and that of the March Hare and tells her that they both were mad. When Alice refuses to go among mad people, the Cheshire Cat informs her that all the creatures of Wonderland are mad. The Cat exemplifies its madness through its grin:

> 'Oh, you can't help that,' said the Cat; 'we're all mad here . . .
>
> . . .
>
> 'Well, then,' the Cat went on, 'you see, a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad.' (Carroll 76)

This inverted attitude of the Cheshire Cat sums up the nature of Wonderland. The Cat teaches her the rules of Wonderland and gives her an insight into the working of things. It is the only character in Wonderland who listens to Alice. As the Cat slowly vanishes, "beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone" (77). Alice then moves on and reaches the house of the March Hare.

The next scene is of the famous March Hare's tea-party attended by the Hatter and the Dormouse. As Alice joins the party, Carroll playfully brings to light the class snobbery and hypocrisy behind the facade of such social customs. The tea-party makes a mockery of the trend among the fashionable upper class to have such pretentious parties:

> The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it. 'No room! No room!' they cried out, when they saw Alice coming. 'There's *plenty* of room!' said Alice indignantly, and sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.
>
> . . .
>
> 'It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited,' said the March Hare.
>
> 'I didn't know it was *your* table,' said Alice; 'it's laid for a great many more than three.'
>
> 'Your hair wants cutting,' said the Hatter. (Carroll 78)

Frustrated by the strange comments and jokes at her expense, Alice advises the Hatter to do something better with his time than asking riddles that had no answers. This leads to a discussion in which Hatter personifies time as his close friend:

> 'If you knew Time as well as I do,' said the Hatter, 'you wouldn't talk about wasting *it*. It's *him*.'
>
> . . .

> if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock. (Carroll 81)

Hatter's is a strong critique of the financially strong section of the bourgeoisie who were not governed by time instead governed time. The capitalists - rich industrialists and aristocrats had the liberty to use time their own way unlike the poor working class whose life was oppressed by their working hours. In the nineteenth century poor labourers had to work for sixteen to eighteen hours in order to make a living. Their whole life was spent trying to earn enough so as to make two ends meet.

Bored with the stupidest party ever attended, Alice decides to enter a door leading into a tree. Once again, she reaches the long hall with the little glass table with the golden key on it. This time she manages to open the door that leads into the garden. She is able to regulate her size by eating the mushroom given to her by the Caterpillar. In the garden Alice observes three gardeners (with the appearance of playing cards) busy painting white roses red. They inform Alice that they had planted white rose-trees in place of red and if the Queen discovered the mistake they would be beheaded. Just then the Queen's procession arrives and the Queen orders their heads to be chopped off. Queen's love for red roses and the pompous formalities of her court are a grotesque version of the very proper and formal ceremonial practices of the court of Queen Victoria. The scene parodies the Queen's attempt to surround herself with extensive rose gardens and sycophant and officious courtiers.

Invited by the Queen to play croquet with her, Alice finds the game weird. She had to play the game in a grotesque and ridiculous fashion which had live hedgehogs as croquet balls and live flamingoes as mallets. She struggles to establish and re-establish order with one aspect of the game but then the other would break down:

> The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo: she succeeded in getting its body tucked away . . . and was going to give the hedgehog a blow with its head, it would twist itself round . . . and when she had got its head down, and was going to begin again, it was very provoking to find that the hedgehog had unrolled itself, and was in act of crawling away. (Carroll 92)

Her endeavour ends in frustration and final submission. A very sensitive person by nature Carroll was very much concerned and disturbed about the way in which the new technologies and unnatural competitive methods were deforming the social sphere of his nation. Alice's attempts at order, refers to the common man's hopeless struggle and consequential anxiety for survival in an inhuman, unreasonable, competent system of the Victorian world which in the name of scientific discoveries and innovations, and other radical tendencies, had made him a victim of industrial and social slavery.

After the game the Duchess tries to befriend Alice. She explains that "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it" (97). Her preoccupation in finding moral in everything is reflective of the self-righteous moralistic temper

of Victorian England. Alice's inquiry about her own rights from the Duchess elicits the following reply:

> 'I've the right to think,' said Alice sharply, for she was beginning to feel a little worried.
>
> 'Just about as much right,' said the Duchess, 'as pigs have to fly.' (Carroll 100)

The Duchess's remark sheds light on the corrupt political system of Victorian England in which the political power was concentrated in the hands of a few (upper class) and the common man was denied even the basic rights of existence. Thus, Lewis Carroll expresses his concern for conducting elections properly, promoting minority representation and proportional representation. His political pamphlets and related letters of 1872-76 reflect his attempts at fair and just elections.

Next Alice is ordered by the Red Queen to visit the Mock Turtle. On the way she meets the Gryphon who takes her to him. The Mock Turtle informs Alice about his education:

> 'We had the best of educations . . .
>
> . . .
>
> '. . . they had at the end of the bill, "French, music, *and washing* extras."
>
> . . .
>
> 'What was that?' inquired Alice.

> 'Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with,' the Mock Turtle replied; 'and then different branches of Arithmetic – Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision.'
>
> . . .
>
> . . . the Drawling-master was an old conger-eel . . . he taught us Drawling, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils.' (Carroll 104-105)

The Mock Turtle's subjects of study at school, parody the education system of the traditional public schools in Victorian England. These schools with their emphasis on – Greek and Latin, house systems, school spirit, improving character – placed the student under unnecessary and unnatural duress. In his childhood, Carroll who himself had been a victim of such a school education, is firm in his rejection of such a system as apparent through this incident:

> The "regular course" of instruction followed by the Mock turtle includes Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision, while the Gryphon goes to "the Classical master" to study Laughing and Grief: all the subjects that a child in the nineteenth century – or today – must learn in order to grow up and enter the adult world that Carroll hated. (Bender 103)

The Mock Turtle and the Gryphon then performs a rowdy dance called the Lobster Quadrille, for Alice's amusement. The madcap dance is a take on ballroom etiquettes, decorous and indecorous behaviour. Carroll in his bid to ridicule the conventions of contemporary society pushes the boundaries of silliness and the fantastic to produce maximum hilarity.

Next the trial is announced and they all run to witness it with Alice. The trial scene mocks the disorganised and flawed English legal system of the nineteenth century:

> The twelve jurors were writing very busily on slates. 'What are they doing?' Alice whispered to the Gryphon. 'They can't have anything to put down yet, before the trial's begun.'
>
> 'They're putting down their names,' the Gryphon whispered in reply, 'for fear they should forget them before the end of the trial.'
>
> . . .
>
> Alice could see . . . that all the jurors were writing down 'stupid things!' on their slates, and . . . one of them didn't know how to spell 'stupid'. (Carroll 117-118)

The King and Queen of Hearts as judges and the jury of animals and some birds ridicule the inconsistencies of the legal system. When the Hatter is called upon as a witness in the trial, he finds himself trapped during the questioning:

> 'Take off your hat,' the King said to the Hatter.
>
> 'It isn't mine,' said the Hatter.
>
> *'Stolen !'* the King exclaimed . . .
>
> 'I keep them to sell,' the Hatter added
>
> . . .
>
> 'Give your evidence,' said the King; 'and don't be nervous, or I'll have you executed on the spot. (119-120)

The King's utterance points to the autocracy and incoherence of the legal system in Carroll's time. The laws were arbitrary and the legal principles based upon precedence. The entire system was marked by inequity and injustice:

> Justice was seriously unequal during the first part of Victoria's reign: two individuals committing the same crime could receive wildly different punishments. (Brantlinger 165)

Soon after this episode Alice starts growing in size, signaling her frustration with the event. This is the final inversion in size that Alice experiences in Wonderland and it marks the beginning of her exit from the fantasy world. Emboldened by her sudden growth in size, she refuses to accept the cards as humans and rebels against the proceedings:

> 'No, no!' said the Queen. 'Sentence first – verdict afterwards.'
>
> 'Stuff and nonsense!' said Alice loudly. 'The idea of having the sentence first!'
>
> 'Hold your tongue!' said the Queen, turning purple.
>
> 'I won't!' said Alice.
>
> 'Off with her head!' the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved.
>
> 'Who cares for you?' said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!'
>
> At this the whole pack rose up into the air, and came flying down upon her: she gave a little scream, half of fright and half of anger, and tried to beat them off, and found herself lying on the bank, with her head in the lap of her sister, who was gently brushing away some dead

> leaves that had fluttered down from the trees on to her face. (Carroll 130)

Carroll inverts the fantastical into real by making Alice call the creatures of Wonderland by (a pack of cards) their true name/identity as in the real world – and thus shatters the Wonderland's control over her:

> Alice in Wonderland begins by violating the boundary between animal and man but ends by reasserting the validity of that boundary. In between these two violations lies a myriad of fantastical inversions and border-crossing that continually defy Alice's aboveground way of thinking. (Carter)

Waking up Alice realises that she has been asleep for a long time. She tells her sister about the extraordinary events of her marvellous dream and then goes in for tea. Her sister continues to sit and reflect upon Alice's adventures in Wonderland so much so that she too begins to dream. The whole place around her becomes alive with the strange creatures of her little sister's dream. As the sister sat on with closed eyes, the author explains the origin of the happenings in Alice's dream, and confirms the distinction between the real and unreal:

> she knew she had but to open them again, and all would change to dull reality – the grass would be only rustling in the wind, and the pool rippling to the waving of the reeds – the rattling tea-cups would change to tinkling sheep-bells, and the Queen's shrill cries to the voice of the shepherd boy – and the sneeze of the baby, the shriek of the

> Gryphon, and all the other queer noises, would change (she knew) to the confused clamour of the busy farm-yard – while the lowing of the cattle in the distance would take the place of the Mock Turtle's heavy sobs. (Carroll 132)

Lastly, Alice's sister pictures her (Alice) as a grown up woman, who would keep the "simple and loving heart of her childhood" (132) through all her riper years and would entertain little children with strange stories:

> she would gather about her other little children, and make *their* eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long ago; and how she would feel with all their simple sorrows, and find a pleasure in all their simple joys, remembering her own child-life, and the happy summer days. (132)

The vision of the elder sister for little Alice is a confirmation of Carroll's will and desire for his favourite Alice Liddell – the girl for whom he wrote the story. He was protective of the innocence of little girls and feared the harshness associated with the process of growing up. So, he wished that Alice should retain the charm of her innocence in the years to come.

Incomplete incidents without proper ending in the novel are suggestive of a fast changing Victorian world – of rapid industrialisation and mechanical developments. Even before Alice is able to understand one situation and character, she finds herself trapped into yet another one; each incident helps to

guage the condition of the common man of Victorian times; it exposes his vulnerability and perpetual dilemma of existence.

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CHAPTER 3

(II)

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE

Lewis Carroll produced the second volume of Alice Books – *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* in December 1871. Despite being more sombre, sober, better-written, and complete than the first book, it did not receive the same appreciation and success. Carroll employs the same basic fantastic elements in this Alice Book once again: a fantasy world inhabited by anthropomorphic plants and animals, magical happenings, changing situations, etc all made possible through the dream mode. Like *Wonderland,* this novel too exhibits the unique quality of Carroll's fantasies they are defined by certain set rules and devices. The background in the Looking-Glass world is governed by the rules of chess, as happenings in Wonderland were frequently determined by size (certain objects making one large while others making one small). The chess-game world is inhabited by live chess-pieces, anthropomorphic animals, flowers and plants that talk and behave like human beings, nursery rhyme characters such as Humpty Dumpty, lion and unicorn, and the like. The visual imagery and verbal play in the *The Looking-Glass* is far more amazing and intelligent than in *Alice's Adventures*

in Wonderland. But the fun-filled, happy, dream-like quality of the first Alice Book takes on a more sombre note in *The Looking-Glass* and the humour becomes sardonic, sometimes even bitter. The author takes the level of satire, parody, allusion, intentional symbolism, and nonsense a step ahead in his second Alice novel. His fondness for every kind of word play, mathematical games, riddles and the like once again, add to the beauty of his fantasy.

As discussed in the introduction of this study, the first half of the Victorian age was a period of technological advancements and new discoveries and invention in various fields of Science. Rapid developments in factory system, railways, steamships, and telegraph lines (nineteenth century's chief contribution to commerce, transportation, and communication) drastically changed the relation between time and space, effecting an enormous transformation in the quality of everyday life of the Victorian common man. Deeply threatened by the anxieties provoked as a result of these advancements and changes, Carroll makes it the central theme of *The Looking-Glass.* He comments and reflects upon these aspects of the Victorian age through the Looking-glass creatures and Alice's encounter with them, and his criticism is more sharp and apparent in this work.

Another idea captured in *The Looking-Glass* is Carroll's fear of his child friends growing older, their loss of innocence which he so much loved and admired; as well as their leaving him in search of more exciting pastures in life. This is an aspect also touched upon in *Wonderland* through the vision of the

elder sister for her young sister Alice at the end of the novel. This idea is omnipresent in the book and the mood of the tale is set by the introductory poem:

Child of pure unclouded brow
And dreaming eyes of wonder!
. . . . . .

In thy younger life's hereafter –
Enough that now thou wilt not fail
To listen to my fairy-tail.

A tale begun in other days,
When summer suns were glowing –
A simple chime, that served to time
. . . . . .
Whose echoes live in memory yet,
Though envious years would say 'forget'

. . . . . .

And though the shadow of a sigh
May tremble through the story,
For 'happy summer days' gone by,
And vanish'd summer glory – (Carroll 135-136)

Carroll was most disturbed with the idea of separation from Alice Liddell, his inspiration and muse for his unforgettable fantasies (as discussed earlier).

When Carroll began working on *The Looking-Glass* in 1868, she was about sixteen years old but he does not allow her (Alice Liddell) to age in his fantasy. Though the second volume of Alice Books appeared seven years after the publication of the first volume Carroll makes Alice, the protagonist of the story, only six months older than the age she was in the first book. In *Wonderland*, Alice was seven years old while in *Looking-Glass*, the author makes her just seven and half years old. It is Carroll's lasting tribute to Alice Liddell, who at the time of publication of the book was nearly twenty years old.

The story proper begins with Alice sitting in a great arm-chair, half asleep talking to herself and scolding her kitten for unwinding the ball of worsted wool:

> 'Oh, you wicked, wicked little thing!' cried Alice . . . 'Really, Dinah ought to have taught you better manners! You *ought* Dinah, you know you ought!' she added. (Carroll 142)

From the outset of the tale, Carroll ridicules the Victorian preoccupation with the code of behaviour and manners. He hints at it at many places in the course of the fantasy. Children of the upper class were supposed to behave with propriety following the norms and etiquette as set by the society. Alice belonging to such a class is shown to be very particular about it. Like an adult, she makes her cat understand the ways of behaving properly otherwise it would

be punished. Her blaming the black kitten for the mischief done brings out colour prejudices of the age (Blacks and Whites). In the nineteenth century racial discrimination on the basis of colour dominated the mindset of the society. British imperialism and colonisation rooted itself on the basis of considering whites as socially superior to the others – blacks/natives the slaves:

> One thing was certain, that the *white* kitten had had nothing to do with it: – it was the black kitten's fault entirely. (Carroll 142)

Alice asks the kitten to play chess with her. She begins with her favorite phrase "Let's pretend". Alice's fondness at pretending to be someone else is a fact related to the author's personality/nature. Carroll being of shy disposition displayed a kind of dual or split personality. In company of adults he was shy and awkward while with children he was very friendly and comfortable and amused them with his tales. In fact, it is revealed that he never acknowledged his pen name in public and refused letters not addressed in his original name.

> 'Let's pretend that you're the Red Queen, Kitty! Do you know, I think, if you sat up and folded arms, you'd look exactly like her . . . however the thing didn't succeed . . . So to punish it, she held it up to the Looking-glass . . . and if you're not good directly,' she added, 'I' ll put you through into the Looking-glass House. (145)

She describes to the kitten her idea of the Looking-glass House where everything is the same as in her house but with all objects seeming to go the other way. This idea of left-right inversion resonates throughout the story. In the looking-glass she could not see things beyond the passage so she says:

> Oh, kitty! How nice it would be if we could only get through the Looking-glass House! . . . Let's pretend the glass has got soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now I declare! It'll be easy enough to get through –'
>
> She was up on the chimney-piece while she said this, though she hardly knew how she got there. And certainly the glass was beginning to melt away. (Carroll 146)

In the first Alice Book, Carroll instead of explicitly confirming the mediating dream state (a fact revealed at the end of the novel), rushes the reader headlong into the imaginary/fantasy world he has created. In *The Looking-Glass* he presents the magical/fantastic world as a result of Alice's perception of the Looking-Glass House. As, Alice passes through the glass and jumps into the Looking-glass room, thus begins her new series of adventures. Though herself invisible to them, she observes the chess-pieces to be alive – talking and walking around. In this reflected version of her house, she finds a book lying on the table near her. It is a book of looking glass poetry "Jabberwocky" whose reversed printing she can read by holding it up to the mirror. This incident

introduces the idea of inversion in *The Looking-Glass* and prepares the readers for more of such reversals that mock and display the true picture of the Victorian era.

She moves out of the room to see the garden. But the path in the Looking-glass world appeared "more like a corkscrew than a path" (Carroll 155). She tried turns after turns wandering up and down but always returning back to the house. Her bewilderment in the alternative world is synonymous with the condition of the Victorian common man. They were confused by the rapidly changing world around them. Not ready to give up. Alice starts again and eventually she comes upon a garden of live flowers with a border of daisies and a tree in the middle. She notices and speaks to the Tiger-lily and is surprised to see that it could talk. The Rose assumes an air of superiority towards Alice and criticises her appearance. These finer species of flowers -- the Tiger-lily and the Rose conscious of their supremacy, act arrogantly and authoritatively:

> they [the daisies] all began shouting together, till the air seemed quite full of little shrill voices. "Silence, every one of you!" cried the Tiger-lily . . . 'They know I can't get at them!' it panted . . . 'or they wouldn't dare do it!'
>
> 'Never mind!' Alice said . . . and stooping down to the daisies . . . she whispered, 'If you don't hold your tongues, I'll pick you!'
>
> There was silence in a moment, and several of the pink daisies turned white.

'That's right!' said the Tiger-lily. 'The daisies are worst of all . . .
(Carroll 157)

The scene is a microcosm of the British social class structure. By alluding to the social hierarchy and class distinction of the flowers in the garden, Carroll refers to the unequal division of power in the British society. Normally the higher classes have more power than the lower classes as represented by the Daises and the Violet. The visual imagery together with the allusive details impacts the readers with the sheer brilliance of the scene.

In the spring garden, Alice meets the Red Queen who seems to have grown since the time she had first seen her among the chess-pieces: then she was only three inches high, but now she had gained human proportion to become half a head taller than her. Such visual aspects help to sustain the fantastical elements of the tale. As Alice expresses her wish to move forward and meet the Queen, the Rose cautions her to move in the opposite direction. Not following the advice, she finds herself back at the front-door of the house. However, by moving in the opposite direction, she is able to meet the Red Queen. This incident beautifully executes Carroll's concept of inversion in the looking-glass and grants his fantasies a special place in the "whimsical, nonsense literature from the western world" (Bose xii).

Red Queen's remarks to Alice "Look up, speak nicely, and don't twiddle your fingers all the time" (Carroll 160), always say "your Majesty" when speaking to her, once again highlights the Victorian emphasis on rules of

etiquettes and virtues of good manners. The Red Queen, obsessed with her sense of authority and power has been made a figure of fun and ridicule through her ridiculous and foolish talk/arguments:

> 'Where do you come from? said the Red Queen. 'And where are you going? . . .'
>
> Alice . . . explained . . . that she had lost her way.
>
> 'I don't know what you mean by *your* way,' said the Queen: 'all the ways about here belong to *me* . . .'
>
> . . .
>
> 'When you say "hill,"' the Queen interrupted, '*I* could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call that a valley.'
>
> 'No, I shouldn't,' said Alice . . . That would be nonsense –'
>
> The Red Queen shook her head. 'You may call it "nonsense" if you like,' she said, 'but *I've* heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!' (Carroll 160-161)

As Alice walks with the Red Queen to the top of the little hill, she observed that it was a curious country with little brooks running across it from side to side and the ground between them divided into squares by a number of hedges:

> 'I declare it's marked out just like a large chessboard!' Alice said at last. . . 'It's a great huge game of chess that's being played all over the world – if this *is* the world at all, you know . . .' (161)

The entire countryside laid out in squares like a gigantic chess board, thus, acts as a setting which draws upon the moves of the game of chess as a plot device.

When Alice expresses her desire to be a Queen, the Red Queen promises to make her one if she could move to the Eight Square in a chess game. Together hand in hand they run very fast but never seemed to pass anything, and then suddenly Alice finds herself sitting on the ground under a tree, the same tree, the same place, despite all the running. She asks the Red Queen:

> 'Well, in *our* country,' said Alice . . . 'you'd generally get to somewhere else – if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing.'
>
> 'A slow sort of country!' said the Queen. 'Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!' (Carroll 164)

The quick movements which lead her nowhere refer to the industrial revolution and mechanical inventions of the nineteenth century. This is an allusion to the mad hustle-bustle of urban existence. England being the very centre of the industrial revolution was in the throes of extreme flux. Yet, the progress and advancement brought by the revolution ironically created a myriad of problems and anxieties for the working class people. Development was at the cost of the common man. Alice's speedy motion was "not for the sake of progress towards a definitive goal, but simply for its own sake" (Bose 102). This is also true for

the industrial growth and development in the Victorian era, which instead of facilitating man's life exacerbated their condition.

The Red Queen after guiding Alice about her moves in the different Squares in the Looking-glass world, goes away. It was time for Alice to move and experience more strange and bizarre happenings. She runs down the hill and jumping over the first of the six little brooks, she suddenly finds herself in a railway carriage full of anthropomorphic animals. When asked by the Guard, to show their tickets, everyone hold out a ticket (nearly about their own size) except Alice:

> 'Now then! Show your ticket, child!' the Guard went on, looking angrily at Alice. And a great many voices all said together . . . 'Don't keep him waiting, child! Why, his time is worth a thousand pounds a minute!' (Carroll 167)

Everything in the Looking-glass world is measured in terms of money. "The land there is worth a thousand pound an inch!", "the smoke alone is worth a thousand pounds a puff!", "Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!" (167). Ticket of the size of human beings represents the role of wealth and the growth of material inventions; how money and material goods instead of serving the people, have subsumed their very existence. The manner in which Alice is ridiculed for having no ticket hints at the condition of those born in want and poverty. Alice represents the psychological bewilderment of the

young children who were prematurely thrown into the baffling, unfriendly and materialistic adult world to work in extreme harsh conditions just to earn money for their daily existence. Carroll satirises the materialistic Victorian society but unlike Dickens his satire is mild: "The seriousness of his concerns is belied by the frantic improvisation of his comic games" (Bose xxvi).

The Gentleman seated opposite to Alice advises her to take a return-ticket every time the train stopped. The idea of a return-ticket again hints at the concept of reversal in the mirror. Carroll again and again reminds his reader that they are exploring the Looking-glass world. Just as the Horse seated by the window announces that the train was to jump over a brook to reach the Fourth Square, the carriage rises up in the air. In her fright Alice catches the Goat's beard, but the beard seems to melt away as she touched it. The next moment she finds herself under a tree and a giant Gnat balancing itself on a twig over her head. The novel is replete with such crazy scenes and incidents in which one environment is dovetailed into another. The division of the Looking-glass world into sections by streams and the crossing of each brook signifies a notable change in the scene as well as action of the story. The brooks represent the division between squares on the chessboard and Alice's crossing them signifies the advancing of her piece. The visual effects of such scenes/happenings impact the fantastical nature of the tale.

The Gnat acquaints Alice to some insects of the Looking-glass world such as: a Rocking-horse-fly made entirely of wood that lived on sap and

sawdust; a Snap-dragon-fly whose body was made of plum-pudding, wings of holly-leaves and its head a raisin burning in brandy, and feeding on frumenty and mince-pie; a Bread-and-Butter-fly whose wings were made of thin slices of bread-and-butter, its body a crust and head a lump of sugar, and it lived on weak tea and cream. This passage introduces the idea of food in *The Looking-Glass*. Food has been one of the basic concerns in both the Alice Books. As mentioned earlier 1830s and 1840s was a period marked by enormous shortage of food leading to inflation wherein the basic necessities like food items could not be afforded by the common man. This led to severe deprivation and starvation:

> A new difficulty came into Alice's head, 'Supposing it couldn't find any?' she suggested.
>
> 'Then it would die, of course.'
>
> 'But that must happen very often,' Alice remarked thoughtfully.
>
> 'It always happens,' said the Gnat. (Carroll 172)

Alice's assumption that starvation must happen often and Gnat's assurance that it was an ordinary occurrence, presents the grim reality in a comic light. Furthermore, these insects and their position on the tree also signify the class structure in Victorian England:

> 'All right,' said the Gnat: 'half way up that bush, you will see a Rocking-horse-fly . . .'

. . .

'Look on the branch above your head,' said the Gnat, 'and there you'll find a Snap-dragon-fly . . .'

. . .

'Crawling at your feet,' said the Gnat . . . 'you may observe a Bread-and-butter-fly . . .' (Carroll 171-172)

The Snap-dragon-fly (on the branch above the head) made of plum pudding, and feeding on frumenty and mince-pie represents the upper class. The Rocking-horse-fly "half way up the bush" swinging from branch to branch relates to the condition of the middle class which was in a state of flux in the nineteenth century as a result of the changes brought by the industrial revolution; the Bread-and-butter-fly made up of thin slices of bread, butter and sugar and living on "weak tea and cream" epitomises the starving working class of Victorian England that laboured hard to earn its meal of mere bread.

As Alice moves on, she reaches an open field with a forest on the other side of it. This was the wood where things had no names, a fact mentioned by the Red Queen. Alice's perplexity as to "what'll become of my name when I go in?" (174) and later in the wood her question "who am I?" (175) reflects the crisis of identity in the Victorian time. In the nineteenth century, along with the mechanical revolution, the revolutionary ideas in other spheres – economic, political, social, religious, scientific posed a threat to the identity of man leaving him in a state of confusion. The changes brought by these revolutions

were in such quick successions that they rapidly changed the world around the common man leaving him bewildered even about his own existence.

In the woods (world of nature) Alice (forgetting her name/identity) befriends a Fawn and "they walked on together through the wood, Alice with her arm clasped lovingly round the soft neck of the Fawn." But as soon as they crossed the wood, the Fawn realising its identity "shook itself from Alice's arm" (Carroll 176) and runs away. Alice too is able to remember her name. This incident elucidates the importance of nature in man's life – it is a refuge from the monotonous existence and harsh realities of life. The Victorian man caught in the grind of daily life had become detached from nature. Carroll through this incident tries to make him realise the regenerative and restorative power of nature in man's life.

Onwards her journey, she meets Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the fat twin brothers. The identically reversed twins, Tweedledum and Tweedledee – (as a set of mirror image) resonate the theme of inversion or reversal in mirror. They both stood under a tree with an arm round each other's neck. The twins are comparable to the Victorian man torn in halves, deluded about his identity (social as well as religious) in the time of change. They looked like a couple of schoolboys and Alice pointing her finger called them "First Boy" and "Next Boy". Annoyed by her rude behaviour Tweedledum reminds her that "'the first thing in a visit is to say "How d'ye do?" and shake hands!'" (178-179) as a part of good manners and proper upbringing. Tweedledee sings a poem about a

Walrus and a Carpenter (to Alice) which is a satirical comment on the corrupt English political system of the nineteenth century. The Walrus and the Carpenter alludes to the rival politicians Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone, who in the name of politics were deceiving and fooling the innocent oysters or voters, thus making a mockery of governance and justice. The identification of the named politicians is based on Sir John Tenniel's illustration in the book. The Walrus sports Disraeli's elegant dress and luxuriant moustache while the Carpenter has the square jaw and untidy clothes of Gladstone. The illustrations in both the Alice Books are an asset to Carroll's fantasies as they immediately capture the attention of the readers and help them to relate with the story. Secondly they enhance the fantastical effect of the tale and at places help the adult reader to discover the hidden meaning.

The twins decide to fight over the rattle not because they wanted to but because the rhyme said it:

> *Tweedledum and Tweedledee*
> *Agree to have a battle;*
> *For Tweedledum said Tweedledee*
> *Had spoiled his nice new rattle.* (Carroll 177)

And then just before the battle, they make excuses to cancel the fight. Here the author reflects upon the meaningless power struggles in which the politicians are involved. This comic interlude caricatures these power

worshippers/political heavy weights and strips them of all dignity in order to expose their mean, vain and vested interests.

Alice next meets the White Queen who tells her that in the Looking-glass world "one's memory works both ways" – as she could realise the incident before it happened. According to the White Queen, Alice (who could remember only her past), had "a poor sort of memory that only works backwards" (Carroll 194). This aspect of memory is reflective of Carroll's ability/memory which:

> often seemed to work both ways: at the same time he thought often of his approaching death and the sadly unavoidable maturation of the young girls whom he loved for their "pure" youthfulness, he also kept a detailed record of his past life, desperately trying to hold back the passage of time because he saw so acutely what lay ahead. (Bose 128)

The arbitrary, ineffective, and corrupt legal system of the Victorian age once again becomes the target of satire, when the White Queen informs Alice about the King's Messenger who was "in prison now, being punished: and the trial doesn't even begin till next Wednesday: and of course the crime comes last of all" (Carroll 194). While talking with Alice, the White Queen suddenly seems to wrap herself in wool. As Alice rubs her eyes and looks again, she finds herself in a shop with a Sheep seated on the other side of the counter. She looks around in the shop and as she tries to locate a "large bright thing", (199)

it seemed to be constantly shifting to "the shelf next above the one she was looking at" (Carroll 199) and then simply passing through the ceiling. The next moment she finds herself and the Sheep in a boat on a river and soon gets absorbed in collecting beautiful, scented rushes. But there was always a lovelier one that she couldn't reach:

> 'The prettiest are always farther:' she said at last . . . and began to arrange her new-found treasure.
>
> What mattered it to her just then that the rushes had began to fade . . . from the very moment that she picked them? . . . dream-rushes, melted away almost like snow . . . but Alice hardly noticed this, there were so many other curious things to think about. (201)

The incident wonderfully captures man's lust for a desired object which never seems to be satiated. Rapid industrialisation of the nineteenth century had made the society more materialist and consumerist in character, increasing man's greed for more money and power. Like a true materialist who never appreciates what he already has or achieved but is always lusting for more. Alice also does not care about her new found treasures thus the representing the hardcore capitalism/materialism of Victorian England.

Suddenly the boat and river vanishes and Alice finds herself back in the shop where she wants to buy an egg. As she moves to the end of the shop to pick an egg, it gets larger and larger – having eyes, nose and a mouth. It was Humpty Dumpty. In course of their conversation, Humpty Dumpty inquires

about Alice's age. When she tells that she is seven years and six months old, he abruptly advices her to leave off growing at seven but for her it is too late. This fact recapitulates Carroll's desire to capture the very essence of Alice Liddell's childhood: then about sixteen when he was composing *The Looking-Glass*.

Humpty Dumpty tries to impress Alice with his self importance. He seems very proud of being well known to the King; though he denies it, his actions suggest otherwise. His fondness for puns and wordplay comes out in his conversation with Alice. He explains the meaning of the word "glory" as "a nice knock-down argument":

> 'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument,"' Alice objected.
>
> 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose to mean – neither more nor less.' (Carroll 209)

Despite Alice's wish Humpty Dumpty sings a poem to her. In between the poem he keeps on making remarks to Alice and at a point stops suddenly to say good-bye. As Alice holds out her hand and says:

> 'Good-bye, till we meet again!' she said as cheerfully as she could.
>
> 'I shouldn't know you again if we *did* meet,' Humpty Dumpty replied in a discontented tone, giving her one finger to shake. (215-216)

Carroll uses Humpty Dumpty, the nursery rhyme character of to mock at the hypocrisy, snobbey and pretentious behaviour of the British upper class that believed itself to be the master of the world and treated the lower class as its slave. The extreme sense of superiority, arrogance and vanity of some members of the Victorian aristocracy made them offer two fingers while shaking hands with their social inferiors. The writer in order to emphasise this mode of insult, makes Humpty Dumpty offer just one finger to shake with Alice. Such acts of class snobbery expose the condescending, contemptuous attitude and unconcern of the British aristocracy towards the people lower in social hierarchy. And in doing so make people think about the poor and have sympathy and concern for them.

On her way to the Eighth Square, Alice is met by the White King, who inquires of her about his two messengers. Just then Haigha informs the King about the fight of the Lion and Unicorn for the crown. As they all run to see the fight, Alice repeats to herself the nursery rhyme:

> *'The Lion and the Unicorn were fighting for the crown:*
> *The Lion beat the Unicorn all round the town.*
> *Some gave them white bread and some gave them brown;*
> *Some gave them plum-cake and drummed them out of town.'* (Carroll 221)

In the novel, Carroll has decided to follow the course of events and the fate of the nursery rhyme characters strictly in accordance with the rhymes: Tweedledum and Tweedledee fight for the rattle, Humpty Dumpty has a great fall, the Lion and the Unicorn are drummed out of town. Unlike *Wonderland*, Alice in *The Looking-Glass* recites the poetry correctly thus reflecting her maturity.

On reaching the place where the other messenger Hatta. was standing watching the fight:

> with a cup of tea in one hand and a piece of bread and butter in the other.
>
> 'He's only just out of prison . . .' Haigha whispered to Alice. 'and they only give them oyster-shell in there – so you see he's very hungry and thirsty . . .'
>
> . . .
>
> 'Were you happy in prison, dear child?' said Haigha.
>
> Hatta looked round once more, and this time a tear or two trickled down his cheek: but not a word would he say. (Carroll 222-223)

The "tear or two" that Hatta sheds in response to Haigha's query, is a comment on the condition of prisons in Victorian England. These places of human incarceration were makeshift, dirty, and unhealthy. Though most of the prisons were reconstructed by 1860 yet they were no better than hell holes where the prisoners lived in abject misery. Haigha and Hatta are none other than the Hare and the Hatter of Wonderland, yet no direct reference has been made to this

fact. However, John Tenniel has drawn them to resemble their Wonderland counterparts.

The fight between the Lion and the Unicorn is a parodic version of the rivalry between the great parliamentary rivals, Gladstone and Disraeli. This interpretation is based on Sir John Tenniel's illustration in the book in which the Lion is shown to resemble Gladstone and the Unicorn to look like Disraeli. Thus, when the Lion defeats the Unicorn, (Gladstone succeeding Disraeli as British Prime Minister in 1868) as per the rhyme the Lion beats the Unicorn all around the town.

In between the fight the Unicorn happens to see Alice and stops by her side. He inquires about Alice and asks the King to give him the plum-cake. The Lion also joins them. Haigha gives the cake to Alice and as she tries to cut it into pieces – they (pieces) all rejoin again:

> 'You don't know how to manage Looking-glass cakes,' the Unicorn remarked. 'Hand it round first and cut it afterwards.'
>
> This sounded nonsense, but Alice very obediently got up, and carried the dish round, and the cake divided itself into three pieces as she did so. '*Now* cut it up,' said the Lion, as she returned to her place with the empty dish. (Carroll 226)

By confronting the readers with scenes which mirror the theme of reversal in the looking-glass, Carroll never allows them to forget that they are in the fantastic world of Looking-glass. At this point (as in the rhyme) the drums

begin to beat. The sound terrifies Alice, who runs across the brook covering her ears with her hands. When the noise dies away, Alice discovers herself to be alone.

Next, she meets the White Knight who tells her that she will be the Queen after crossing the wood and that he will lead her safely through it. Dressed in tin armour he had a "little deal box fastened across his soldiers" (Carroll 231). Alice looks at the box with great curiosity:

> 'I see you're admiring my little box,' the Knight said in friendly tone. 'It's my own invention – to keep clothes and sandwiches in. You see I carry it upside-down, so that the rain can't get in.'
>
> 'But the things can get *out*.' Alice gently remarked. 'Do you know the lid's open?'
>
> . . .
>
> 'I was wondering what the mouse-trap was for,' said Alice. 'It isn't very likely there would be any mice on the horse's back.'
>
> 'Not very likely, perhaps.' said the Knight; 'but, if they *do* come, I don't choose to have them running all about.'
>
> 'You see,' he went on after a pause, 'it's as well to be provided for *everything* . . .' (231-232)

The Knight's fascination for inventing things represents the Victorian mood for scientific discoveries and inventions. An upside down box with an open lid and a mouse trap on horse's back (which were of no use) mocks at the mechanical inventions and the new discoveries of the nineteenth century. A sign of growth,

development and prosperity, yet, they in no way facilitated the common man to improve his lot – from the misery and want of his condition:

> If invention was a sign of modernization and industrialization in Victorian England, perhaps, Carroll . . . suggests that the surge of modernization is not the key to bettering oneself and the environment. (Ansay)

Having reached the end of woods, the White Knight informs Alice that a few yards after crossing the brook she will reach the Eighth Square and become a Queen. As the White Knight prepares to leave her, the scene becomes a manifestation of Carroll's fear and pain of parting from his child-friends, particularly Alice Liddell:

> you'll stay and see me off first?' he added as Alice turned away with an eager look. 'I shan't be long. . . . I think it'll encourage me you see.
>
> 'Of course I'll wait,' said Alice . . .
>
> 'I hope so,' the Knight said doubtfully: 'but you didn't cry so much as I expected.' (Carroll 244)

The White Knight is the caricature of Carroll himself with his shaggy hair, mild blue eyes and a kind gentle face. And the Knight's patience despite getting vexed with Alice's constant chatter draws comparison with the writer's shy, reserved and quite nature.

On reaching the Eighth Square, a golden crown magically appears on Alice's head with the Red Queen and the White Queen sitting close on either side of her. Then the Red Queen invites the White Queen to Alice's dinner-party which had guests of all kinds – animals, birds, flowers. She sits at the head of the table, her chair between the Red and the White Queen. The banquet in her honour parodies the social conventions, norms of propriety, conservative rituals – the vain, pretentious and conservative behaviour of the Victorian society:

> 'You look a little shy, let me introduce you to that leg of mutton,' said the Red Queen 'Alice–Mutton: Mutton–Alice.' The leg of mutton *got* up in the dish and made a little bow to Alice; and she returned the bow, not knowing whether to be frightened or amused.
>
> 'May I give you a slice?' she said, taking up the knife and fork . . .
>
> 'Certainly not,' the Red Queen said, very decidedly: 'it isn't etiquette to cut anyone you've been introduced to. Remove the joint!' And the waiter carried it off and brought a large plum-pudding in its place.
>
> 'I won't be introduced to the pudding, please,' Alice said rather hastily, 'or we shall get no dinner at all . . .' (Carroll 256-257)

While Alice's manners are questioned and she (the guest of honour) chided for her lack of social grace, the Red Queen and other creatures continue to eat "just like pigs in a trough" (259). Such characterisation of the creatures of Looking-glass world ridicules the absurdities of figures of authority in Victorian society;

it is a sharp attack on their hypocritical and pretentious behaviour. In the final episode, the Red Queen asks Alice "to return thanks in a neat speech" (Carroll 259). As she stands to give her thanks, she feels herself rising up in the air. By holding the edge of the table she manages to pull herself down. But then all sorts of absurd things begin to happen:

> The candles all grew up to the ceiling, looking something like fireworks at the top. As to the bottles, they each took a pair of plates, which they hastily fitted on as wings, and so, with forks for legs, went fluttering about in all directions . . .
>
> At this moment she heard a hoarse laugh at her side, and turned to see what was the matter with the White Queen; but, instead of Queen, there was the leg of mutton sitting in the chair. 'Here I am!' cried a voice from the soup-tureen, and Alice turned again, just in time to see the Queen's broad, good-natured face grinning at her for a moment over the edge of the tureen, before she disappeared into the soup. (260-261)

This scene of absolute pandemonium in the Looking-glass world constructs "a terrifying picture of Carroll's apocalyptic vision of the future of English society and culture" (Bose xxvii). Alice unable to stand the chaos any longer pulls at the table-cloth with both her hands and everything crashes down in a heap on the floor. She fiercely catches the Red Queen and says "I'll shake you into a kitten" (Carroll 261) and shatters the Looking-glass world's charm over her. The turning of the Red Queen back into a kitten inverts the fantastical into

the real and Alice finds herself back in the arm-chair, holding her kitten (Kitty) and kissing her. The scene recaptures the moment from where the fantastic journey into the Looking-glass world began: "Let's pretend that you're the Red Queen, Kitty!" (Carroll 145). The end has been artistically and aesthetically fused with the beginning. As in the first Alice Book, Carroll explained the origin of the chief characters in Alice's dream towards the conclusion. similarly in *The Looking-Glass*, the readers are informed (at the end) that it was Alice's black kitten which became the Red Queen and the white kitten changed into the White Queen of her dream. The story closes with the question whose dream it was – Alice's or the Red King's? as in the course of the story Tweedledee and Tweedledum told Alice that all the creatures in the Looking-glass world were "a sort of thing" (186) in the Red King's dream.

Carroll concludes this novel with a poem in which he recalls the memorable boat trip of 4th July 1862, during which *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was originally told to the three Liddell sisters. The melancholic air of the poem emphasizes Carroll's fear with the growing up of his child friends, especially Alice. "The poem is an acrostic, the initial letters of each line spelling out Alice's full name – ALICE PLEASANCE LIDDELL" (Bose 98). A unique, innovative and artistic confirmation of the novel being a tribute to Carroll's favourite child friend -- Alice.

The Alice Books are in the form of a series of adventures. strange encounters and extraordinary happenings that befall Alice, both in Wonderland

as well as in the Looking-glass world. The dream motif explains the abundance of nonsensical, ridiculous and absurd events of the story. The narrative follows the dream as Alice encounters the various episodes which need to be interpreted in relation to herself and the world in which she lived in. The episodic framework of the novels, strings together the various incidents to give them an organic unity, and sustains them by an overwhelming mood of humour and playfulness. However, the fantastic and the bizarre happenings read as a satiric comment, an exposé on the contemporary life and situation the Victorian Age, in which Carroll lived. It is this contextualisation which gives the Alice Books, their peculiar charm and humour, without which Carroll's satire would not have found resonance in an adult world. He has set aside the call of logical rules and rational principles. The ingenuity of setting, this creative nonsense – a child's fantasia/alternative reality, against the backdrop of established Victorian manners, allows the writer to both subvert convention and emphasise the eschewed nature of the world of harsh reality. The books read as a kind of philosophical banter to highlight the absurdity of the real world against the silly nonsense of the alternate world. Furthermore, they give expression to Lewis Carroll's celebration of youthful outlook – the need to preserve childlike innocence and simplicity, a domain of immense imaginative possibilities.

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CONCLUSION

The importance of fantasy genre is well recognised in the twentieth century fantasy fiction such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1950), C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books (1997-2007). The success of these fantasy novels reflect back on some of the best works in fantasy mode produced during the nineteenth century. But, despite the popularity these works achieved in the nineteenth century, the importance of fantasy as an artistic device of meaningful communication remained unexamined. Thus, this study analyses how the fantasy mode contributes richness and wholeness of effect to these novels/writings by making them aesthetically compact meaningful and beautiful.

The Victorian age in literature was an age of realism and novel was the chief form adopted. Realistic fiction depicts the life as it seems to the common reader. The realists prefer the average, commonplace and everyday aspects of the contemporary scene over the rare ones. As discussed in the introduction, the Victorian era was an era of revolutionary changes in every field mechanical, social, religious, political, economic, scientific, and intellectual. Literature being the mirror of life and realism – the mode of expression during the nineteenth century, the literature of this period reflects the restless spirit of the age. The realistic novels present the doubts, conflicts and frustrations of the

Victorian world regardless of its impact. Thus, the fiction becomes too didactic and boring. The Victorian writers felt the need to turn towards a different mode – fantasy, to capture the attention of the reader and to express their dissatisfaction with the contemporary world.

Several critics have defined fantasy variously, according to the way it has been used in literature. It may elude proper definition, but in general, fantasy is understood and appreciated as a genre that employs magic, supernatural beings and events, mysterious places, creation of other worlds, time travel, hallucination, dream, and all that is extraordinary and impossible within the realm of realistic fiction. Fantasy genre is not a new form that originated in the Victorian period rather it is as old as literature itself. But its form and modes have changed with the passage of time.

In earlier times, the fantasy stories: fairy tales, folklores, myths, and morality plays employed fantasy elements in the creation of magical worlds with supernatural beings and humans with extraordinary magical powers. During the sixteenth and seventeenth century, fantasy was adapted in drama and poetry by Sydney, Spenser, Shakespeare; and by Bunyan and a few other writers in prose writings. In the eighteenth century with the development of the novel genre, fantasy found a perfect medium for expression. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the gothic revival credited to Horace Walpole with his novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), provided the staple elements for the fantasy works to be produced during the nineteenth century. Besides this, not

much was done in the fantasy mode. It was only with Edger Taylor's (two volumes) translation of *German Popular Stories* (1823-26) people's interest was roused in children's literature and with the publication of Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* (1846), fantasy entered its most creative phase.

A survey of the fantasy works of the Victorian age suggests that basically three types of fantasy literature were being written during the period: Fantasy for Children, Escapist Fantasy, and Serious, Meaningful Fantasy or Fantasy with a Purpose.

Fantasy, found its way in Children's literature with the publication of *German Popular Stories* (1823-26) that stimulated the translation and production of fairy tales throughout the nineteenth century. The fantasy works written under this category written during the first-half of nineteenth century, were basically to instruct children. They emphasised the importance of unselfishness and self-improvement, prudence and reason and contained instructions from simple religious conduct to admonishments for proper moral and social behaviour. Robert Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1842), Francis Paget's *The Hope of the Katzekopfs* (1844), Anna Maria Hall's *Midsummer: a Fairy Tale of Love* (1848), John Ruskin's *The King of Golden River* (1851), Bram Stoker's *Under the Sunset* (1881) – a collection of children's stories, are full of moral lessons for children as well as adults. They deal with the triumph of love, kindness, and goodness over evil. Lucy Clifford's *The New Mother* (1882) emphasises the importance of obedience

to parents and to God. An important feature of these fantasies was that they had adults and not children as the centre of the action. Around 1860, when the idea of "beautiful child" and childhood – as a separate state – took hold of the Victorian minds, children were made the centre of action. The purpose of these stories was to amuse children rather than to instruct them. George MacDonald's Princess Books –*The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883); Bram Stoker's *Under the Sunset* (1881), were written with the same purpose. A characteristic feature of these fantasies is that the protagonist/character moves from our world to another – the fantastic one, while in the earlier fantasies the characters remained in the same world, whether our own or the imaginative one, throughout the story.

Bored with the didactic realistic fiction of the Victorian era, writers began to feel the need to produce fantasies for adults that could provide them relief/escape from the hard reality of everyday existence. Such Escapist fantasies included works carrying either no deeper meaning or one lacking in vitality. They were written with a viewpoint of reader's pleasure in the invented character or situation. Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* (1846), consisting entirely of drawings and limericks, is a remarkable work in this category. Lear's limericks held nothing but entertainment. They do not have any moral or social significance attached to them. Though William Morris' *The Well at the World's End* (1896) has possibilities of mythic or philosophic significance attached with the Dry Tree, it does not stand out so much for the

symbolic significance as for the sense of wonder that invests it. In the Escapist Fantasy, as Manlove points out, any number of symbols may appear in the story but without any potent meaning and if they have any significance attached to them, it is not vitally related to the story. George Meredith's *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1855), written in the style of *The Arabian Nights*; F. Anstey's *The Brass Bottle* (1900), story of an Arabian Jinn imprisoned in a brass bottle, thousands of years before by Solomon is a light comedy, that draws heavily and in some details on *The Arabian Nights*; Lord Dunsany's fantasy short stories – *The Gods of Pegana* (1905), *Time and the God* (1906), *The Sword of Welleran* (1908) and *The Book of Wonder* (1912), deal with an invented world, with its own gods, history and geography. These are some of the best examples of Escapist fantasy by the writers of the nineteenth century (though written in twentieth century).

Apart from providing entertainment and escape, writers in the Victorian era also employed fantasy to air their concerns with the prevailing conditions in their society by writing Serious, Meaningful Fantasies. They took advantage of the genre and conveyed what they could not express in the realistic mode of fiction. Their aim was to produce a total vision of transformed reality. These fantasies are powerfully presented and thus leave an imprint on the reader's imagination to give him/her a measure of truth or reality. As the fantasy genre provides the writers, liberty from all restrictions of the realistic mode, they easily do away with the conventions of the realistic fiction: unities of time,

place, and action, or chronology. They feel free to express their emotions and follow their imagination, which is restricted or suppressed in the realistic mode. Thus, the dark, grim and harsh realities of the Victorian world could be better dealt with in an oblique manner; attacked through humour and comedy: irony and satire; farce and burlesque; ridiculous and absurd. The need for change/reformation is posited through a study in contrast by employing the medium of fantasy, by the creation of a make belief, unreal and extraordinary world of alternate reality. This other/imaginary world peopled by extraordinary beings ranging from supernatural agencies, phantoms, ghosts, goblins, kobolds, ogres, fairies, water babies, anthropomorphic plants and animals, playing cards and chess pieces with human attributes, and with strange and bizarre happenings, personification, animism, time travel, vision, vignette, help to create a contrast between the real and the unreal world, so as to hold a mirror to expose the ugliness of real life and thus emphasise the need for change.

Serious, Meaningful Fantasy, in the hands of the Victorian fantasists, thus served a dual purpose, it provided an escape/relief to the reader from the harsh realities of life as well as obliquely commented on the conditions of the age, in order to set them right. Some examples of Meaningful fantasies (other than the selected writings for the research study) are Thomas Hood's *Miss Killmansegg and her Precious Leg* (1842), a satire on society maimed and dehumanised by greed; Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854), deals with the social issues, such as the role of women and the effects of industrialisation:

William Makepeace Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* (1854), satirises and challenges the idea of beauty and marriage; Christina Rossetti's poem *Goblin Market* (1859), presents the distorted, divided, materialistic Victorian society, terrified to come to terms with its own deepest needs and desires, and the condition of women in such a society, it also lays emphasis on female education; Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) and *Erewhon Revisited* (1901), also deal with the effects of industrialisation and satirises the Victorian concept of duty, morality, and religion; Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Books* (1894 and 1895), *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910), deal with the contemporary social issues; Edith Nesbit's trilogy of novels *Five Children and It* (1902), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904), and *The Story of Amulet* (1906), contain serious social awareness, *The Harding Luck* (1909) presents a contrast between the seventeenth century and nineteenth century England with its ugliness, unemployment and neglect of children, *The Magic City* (1910), reveals the effects of mechanisation through the story of a Giant Sloth becoming a slave to a machine that he himself wished to have.

The present study examines the importance of the fantasy mode and the purpose of Serious, Meaningful Fantasies by selecting the popular novels of Dickens, MacDonald, Kingsley and Carroll. These authors employed the fantasy mode in order to deal with the dark realities of Victorian England in their respective manner and under their distinctive signature. Thus, in their works, fantasy becomes the voice of reality. The Victorian age is the most

interesting period of English history, marked by rapid growth and changes in all walks of life. Rapid industrialisation, new inventions and discoveries, development of railways, steamships, telegraph lines drastically changed the everyday life of the Victorian common man. These technological advancements also affected the social, political, economic systems and religious beliefs of the nineteenth century England. The evils of industrialisation and the anxieties (social, moral, spiritual) suffered by the Victorian man form the chief concern in the selected Victorian novels.

Charles Dickens' Christmas Books, George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*, and Lewis Carroll's Alice Books in Fantasy literature stand out for the wonderful/imaginative/fantastic stories they tell. The protagonist in each of these stories, navigates the distance between reality and alternate reality. They journey through the created fantastical worlds which appear to be free from the problems of their contemporary real world. However, a deeper probing and critical analysis, allow the readers to conclude that the problems of real life may also find manifestation in the created worlds. The readers, dissatisfied with the prevailing conditions of their world find an instant connect and identification with these created, imaginary worlds. They see their own problems and issues reflected in the dream/fantastical/wonderful/looking-glass world of these books.

In his novels Dickens is in a constant search of solution to the problems of life. In doing so, he transformed the novels to incorporate a social vision

beyond the limitation of mimesis that led to the creation of world of speaking shadows: a world of gothic and prophetic vision. Dickens did not want his Christmas stories to be didactic so he chose fantasy as a medium to convey his message. Christmas Books stand at the heart of his fantasy writings. Within the dream mode of these books, Dickens relied heavily on elements of gothic literature – supernatural beings (ghost, goblin, phantom, spirit, fairies), visual and aural effects to create the atmosphere of mystery, suspense, horror, and enchantments; personifications; signs and symbolism, visions and vignettes, time travel; leitmotifs; incantations; graphical allusions; double, inverted or partial selves to present the true picture of his contemporary society. The dream mode allowed the writer, a greater scope to play with various techniques in order to give expression to his greatest fears, desires and dissatisfaction with the prevalent conditions of the contemporary society.

In the Christmas Books, the evils of industrialisation are excellently presented by Dickens with the help of these fantasy elements. They deal with the problems of the industrial cities – pollution, creation of industrial slums with inhuman living conditions, poverty, exploitation of cheap labour, child labour, starvation, spread of epidemics, high infant mortality rate, increase in prostitution and crime etc. The dream world, allows Dickens to portray a true picture of his times; of a morally and spiritually impoverished society, guided by material greed. Snobbery and hypocrisy of the upper-class Victorian society are highlighted and the unjust, corrupt political and judicial system that

favoured the propertied class is satired. The importance of domestic/family life, virtues of charity and love, religious faith and morally upright life in the harsh and heartless Victorian world is emphasised. With the help of his unforgettable characters and incidents of his fantasy stories, Dickens deals with all the contemporary problems and evils of the Victorian society and suggests possible solutions. Fantasy provided him with a wider scope and a platform to voice his dissatisfaction and unhappiness with the prevailing conditions.

George MacDonald chose the fantasy genre to communicate his moral and spiritual beliefs for the betterment of man and humanity which he was denied to do in church. Because of his liberal theology and unorthodox beliefs, his views were considered to be heretical and thus he was forced to resign by the members of his congregation. *Phantastes*, allows him to preach Christian virtues and morals. The elements of traditional fairy tale and gothic literature are employed by him to create the most amazing tale of fantasy literature. The Fairy Land with its supernatural creatures (flower-fairies, fairy men and women, kobolds, goblins, ogre, giants), animated statues, anthropomorphic plants and animals, magic, vignettes, time travel have a moral purpose to instruct and uplift mankind. The protagonist's "shadow" and images of light and darkness are made to reflect upon virtues and vices, good and evil, and thus guide the readers to follow the path of goodness. MacDonald promotes the virtues of charity, benevolence, obedience, sacrifice, and noble deeds done in favour of humanity and brings forth the consequences of vices (pride and

weakness) in human nature. Through the story of Cosmos and the enchanted mirror he conveys his idea of true love. The Beech-tree lady and the four oaks guarding the cottage highlight the protective power and importance of nature in a mechanised world. *Phantastes* posits the writer's belief to have faith in God and his creations. Thus, for MacDonald fantasy became a medium to preach his ideology and views which he was denied to do due to the restrictions imposed on him by the church.

Charles Kingsley gives vent to his frustration and dissatisfaction with the Victorian society in *Water Babies* through the methods of fairy tale fiction. Adapting the light tone of fairy tales, he uses the fantastical elements to convey the moral lesson to both children and adults alike, in a gentle and entertaining manner. By creating the wonderful/fantastic world inhabited by water babies, fairies, and other supernatural creatures; and by employing the traditional fairy tale elements – anthropomorphic animals, personified objects, magic, magical happenings, sudden change of places, playing with time Kingsley deals with the problems of his age. He highlights the evils of child-labour, high infant mortality rate, pollution, unhygienic conditions in the industrial slums, educational and political system, inventions and discoveries. He mocks and satirises the snobbery, hypocrisy, fashion and vanities prevalent in the Victorian world, and offers a unique perspective on the theory of evolution and religion. By blending the real and the fantastic world, he suggests (to the readers shaken by religious doubts) that religion and science can coexist. The

fairies (Bedonebyasyoudid, Doasyouwouldbedoneby, Mother Carey, Sea-Mother) as personification of virtues and natural principles, make one realise the miraculous power of divine reality underlying the world of nature that aids spiritual regeneration. Tom's experience in the created alternate world, offers the readers hope and faith in humanity, and to work for a larger charity, goodwill and forgiveness – indeed to become a better person.

Lewis Carroll being a shy person selected the fantasy mode to air his desires, deepest fears and concern for the age. The Wonderland and Looking-glass world of the Alice Books, inhabited by anthropomorphic plants and animals, playing cards with human attributes and live chess-pieces, nursery rhyme characters (Humpty-Dumpty, Lion and Unicorn and others) refer to the social, political, economic, educational and legal system of Victorian England. Carroll employs puzzles, logic, nonsense verses, paradoxes, magic tricks, riddles, word play – pun, anagram, inversion, jokes, absurd events to mock and satirise the dark realities of the contemporary society. Like Dickens, Carroll also deals with the ill-effects of industrialisation and the social evils of Victorian society: over-population in cities, conditions of the slums, Hungry-forties, use of drugs among the working class people; materialism and hypocrisy; class consciousness/snobbery – fashion and vanities of upper-class English people, emphasis on etiquettes, manners and the burden of domestication that a girl bore in the Victorian society. The fantasy mode enables him to satirise the corrupt political and judicial system of his age that

favoured the propertied class; the educational system of traditional grammar schools; Victorian zeal for inventions and discoveries. Furthermore, Lewis Carroll's fantasy works give expression to his celebration of the youthful outlook – the need to preserve the childlike innocence and simplicity, apart from reflecting and presenting a true picture of the Victorian world.

Thus, we may conclude that the fantasy genre helped these Victorian fantasists to evolve a new language, to probe, explore and fulfill their desire for a better and a more unified reality. Fantasy in their hands, showed the way towards a new kind of thinking and feeling as well as hold a mirror to reveal the darker sides of our own world. It becomes a mode to study, analyse and interpret the real world so as to pave way for a better world for mankind to live in. Thus, this research study suggests a new way of looking at the importance of the fantasy genre by analysing how each of these writers/novelists have redefined the fantastic method as an artistic device of meaningful communication of their vision of life.

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